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A. P. HERBERT

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Edited by E. V. Knox

A. P. HERBERT



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I. A CRIMINAL TYPE

TO-DAY I am MAKing aN inno6£vation.
as you mayalready have gessed, I am
typng this article myself Zz½Instead of writing
it, The idea is to save time and exvBKpense,
also to demonstyap demonBTrike = =damn,
to demonstratO that I can type /ust as well
as any blessedgirl if I give my mInd to iT'' ''
Typng while you compose is realy extraora-
ordinarrily easy, though composing whilr you
typE is more difficult. I rather think my
typing style is going to be different froM my
u6sual style, but Idaresay noone will mind that
much. looking back i see that we made rather
a hash of that awfuul wurd extraorordinnaryk ?
in the middle of a woRd like thaton N-e gets
quite lost? zhy do I keep putting question
marks instead of fulstopSI wonder. Now you
see i have put a fullstop instead Of a question
mark it nevvvver reins but it pours.

the typewriter to me has always been a
mustery£? and even now that I have gained
a perfect mastery over the machine in gront of
me i have npt th3 faintest ide a hoW it workss %
&or instance why does the thingon thetop
the klnd of overhead Wailway arrangement

move along one pace after every word; I have examined the mechanism from all points of view but there seems to be no reason at all why it should do this. damn that £, it keeps butting in : it is just like real life. then there are all kinds of attractive devices and levers and buttons of which is a marvel in itself, and does something useful without letting on how it does it.

For instance on this machine which is American a machine I mean a machine, made of aluminium, and very light so that you can CARRY it about on your holidays (there is that £ again) and type out your poems on the Moon immediately, and there is only one lot of keys for capitals and ordinary letters ; when you want to do a Capital you press down a special key marked cap I mean CAP with the left hand and you press down the letter with the other, like that abcd, no, ABCDEFG . how jolly that looks . as a matter of fact this takes a little getting into as all the letters on the keys are printed in capitals so now and then one forgets to press down the Special capital key. not often, though. on the other hand once one has got it down and has written a nice name in capitals like LLOYD GEORGE IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO REMEMBER TO PUT IT DOWN AGAIN AND THEN YOU GET THIS SORT OF THING WHICH

SPOILS THE LOOOK OF THE HOLE
 PAGE . or els insted of preSSing down the
 key marked CAP onepresses down the key
 m arked FIG and then instead of LLOYD
 GEORGE you find that you have written
 1196% : 394:3. this is very dissheartening and
 £t is no wonder that typists are sooften sououred
 in ther youth.

Apart fromthat though the key marked FIG
 is rather fun , since you can rite such amusing
 things withit, things like % and @ and dear
 old & not to mention = and ¼ and ¾ and !!!
 i find that inones ordinary (i never get that
 word right) cor orresponden£c one doesnt use
 expressions like @ @ and %%% nearly
 enough. typewriting gives you a new ideaof
 possibilities o fthe engli£h language ; thE
 more i look at % the more beautiful it seems
 to Be : and like the simple flowers of england
 itis per£aps most beauti£ul when seen in
 the masss, Look atit

%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

how would thatdo for a BAThrooM wall-
 paper? it could be produced verery cheaply

and it could be calld the CHERRYdesign
 damn, imeant to put all that in capitals. iam
 afraid this articleis spoilt now but butt bUt
 curse . But perhaps the most excitingthing
 a£out this mac£ine is that you can by pressing
 alittle switch suddenly writein redor green in-
 stead of in black ; I donvt understanh how £t
 is done butit is very jollY ? busisisness men us e
 the device a gre t deal wen writing to their
 membersof PARLIAMENT, in order to empha-
 sasise the pointin wich the£r in£ustice is worSe
 than anyone elses in£ustice . wen they come
 to WE ARE RUINED they burst out into red
 and wen they come to WE w WOULD
 remIND YOU tHAT ATtHE LAST E£EC-
 TION yoU UNDERTOOK they burst into
 GReeN. thei r typists must enjoy doing those
 letters. with this arrang ment of corse one
 coul d do allkinds of capital wallpapers. for
 Instance wat about a scheme of red £'s and
 black %'s and gReen &'s ? this sort of thing

£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%
&	£	&	£	&	£	&	£	&	£
£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%
&	£	&	£	&	£	&	£	&	£

Manya poor man would be glad to £ave
 that in his parLour ratherthan wat he has got
 now. of corse, you wont be ab?e to apreciate

A CRIMINAL TYPE

the fulll baauty of the design since i underst and that the retched paper which is going to print this has no redink and no green inq either ; so you must £ust imagine that the £'s are red and the &'s are green. it is extroarordinarry (wat a t erribleword!!!) how backward in MAny waYs these uptodate papers are www $\frac{1111111}{4444442} = \frac{3}{4}$ now how did that happen i wond er; i was experimenting with the BACK SPACE key ; if that is wat it is for i dont thing i shall use it again. iI wonder if i am impriving at this $\frac{1}{2}$ sometimes i thing i am and so metimes i thing iam not . we have not had so many £'s lately but i notice that theere have been one or two misplaced q's & icannot remember to write i in capital s there it goes again.

Of curse the typewriter itself is not wolly guiltless $\frac{1}{2}$ like all mac&ines it has amind of it sown and is of like passions with ourselves. i could put that into greek if only the machine was not so hopelessly MOdern. it's chief failing is that it cannot write m'sdecently and instead of h it will keep putting that confounded £. as amatter of fact ithas been doing m's rather better today butthat is only its cussedussedness and because i have been opening my shoul ders wenever we have come to an m; or should it be A m? who can tell; little peculiuliarities like making indifferent m's are very important &

When one is buying a typewriter one should make careful enquiries about them; because it is things of that sort which so often give criminals away. There is nothing a detective likes so much as a typewriter with an idiosyncrasy. For instance if I commit a murder I should not think of writing a letter about it with this of all typewriters because that fool of a £ would give me away at once. I daresay Scotland Yard have got specimens of my typewriting locked up in some pigeon-hole already. If they £ave it they ought to; it ought to be part of my dossier.

I think the place of the typewriter in ART is insufficiently appreciated. Modern art I understand is chiefly symbolical expression and straight lines. A typewriter can do straight lines with the underlining mark) and there are few more attractive symbols than the symbols I have used in this article; I merely throw out the suggestion

I don't think I shall do many more articles like this it is too much like work? but I am glad I have got out of that £ habit;

A. P. £.

(1921)

II. BUYING A BOAT

LAUGH at us if you will, but in Suburbia we do see life. Your garish artificial West-End existence may be strange to us ; but here in Hammersmith we are daily face to face with the simple, elemental, healthy forces of Nature.

In spring, for example, when we are not thinking about white-washing and grass-seed and garden-chairs and the other delights of the Season, we are thinking about boats. Either we are preparing to buy a boat, or we are preparing to sell a boat, or we are assisting our neighbour to buy (or sell) a boat. Who is there in your gilded Belgravia who opens the Season by buying (or selling) a boat ? I do not mean a yacht. I mean a boat. A simple, natural, healthy, elemental thing. About twelve feet long.

Passing the ferry a week or two ago I observed upon the mast of one of the boats which are moored there the notice ' FOR SALE '. She is a grey-painted, dingy and elderly craft, built for speed rather than picnics, and with very little lying-down space. To my knowledge she has been lying there for years, and I have never given her a moment's thought before. The

notice 'FOR SALE', however, inflamed me (before now the notice 'FOR SALE' upon a boat has inflamed the whole of Hammersmith).

Unhappily I was not at the moment in the position to buy another boat.

'The very boat for Badger,' I said to myself. Badger has no boat. He ought to have a boat. He *shall* have a boat.

I approached old Joe, one of the three elderly watermen who mysteriously exist upon a single ferry and the hire of a few rowing-boats. They never seem to be in want of work or the price of a beer ; and they never seem to be working. Now and then they enter a ferry-boat, and slowly, painfully, with many remarks about the tide and about the weather, propel a passenger or two across the river. For the rest they sit against a wall, as Joe was sitting, contemplate Eternity and discuss (when possible) the buying and selling of boats.

'Good afternoon, Joe,' said I.

'Afternoon, sir,' said old Joe gloomily. 'Fine tide to-day, sir.'

'Yes,' I said, 'it's a big tide.'

'Making up very fast with the east wind be'ind 'er,' said he.

'Yes,' I said, 'it's making up fast.'

'Be a bigger tide than yesterday, I daresay,' said old Joe hopefully.

BUYING A BOAT

‘ I shouldn’t wonder,’ I said.

(In Hammersmith and Chiswick we devote large sections of the year to this kind of conversation.)

‘ What do they want for that boat ? ’ I inquired, judging that the subject of the tide was nearly exhausted.

A gleam of real interest quickened in the dull old eyes.

‘ What boat’s that ? ’ he said, with an air of surprise.

‘ The *Bluebell*.’

‘ The *Bluebell* ? Ah ! I believe ’e’d let ’er go for ten pounds,’ he said. ‘ And she’s cheap at that,’ he added, spitting (a sure sign that he was lying).

‘ Who does she belong to ? ’ (Yes, I know that there are grammatical objections to that sentence, but that is what I said.)

‘ Young-feller-name-o’-Thompson.’

‘ And why’s he selling her ? ’

‘ Couldn’t ’andle ’er. ’E don’t know no more about sailin’ a boat than I do about a sewin’-machine. An’ ’e wants the money. Take less than ten, I dare say.’

‘ Do you know anything about her ? ’ I said.

‘ What’s her history ? ’

The old man boldly met my gaze (a sure sign that he was about to lie).

I have had occasion before to comment on the corrupting influence exerted by those two noble and beautiful things, the horse and the boat, on the characters of men who have to deal with them in the way of sale or exchange. In this case, though, there was no reason to suspect that old Joe had any direct interest in the sale of the boat. He simply wished that the boat should be sold ; the pure and unselfish wish of the longshoreman that the property in all boats shall pass as often as possible, so that the interest of life and the conversation of the shore may be eternally renewed and kept alive.

‘ I’ve known ’er for years, sir,’ he said. ‘ She’s the quickest little boat below locks. Or above,’ he added, ‘ for ’er size.’ And he continued to meet my gaze.

I know old Joe. And old Joe knows me ; and he knows that I know him. And he knew that I knew that this was not the whole truth about the *Bluebell*. But he also knows that I know the rules. He is my friend. But there are neither friends nor enemies on the pitiless floor of the Boat Exchange. There are only buyers and sellers, and all those not immediately interested are on the side of the seller. And I knew that all the complex forces of modern civilization, concentrated into one

force, would not drag from Old Joe the whole truth about the *Bluebell*. For, if it were otherwise, how is the property in boats ever to pass, and how is the interest of life and the conversation of the shore to be perpetually renewed and kept alive?

‘I see,’ I said, and left him.

I went to see Badger, who was very busy drawing a daffodil. ‘I think I’ve found you a boat,’ I said. ‘The very thing for you.’

‘I don’t want a boat,’ he replied.

‘It’s a bargain,’ I said, ‘if it’s all right.’

‘Most things are,’ he answered. ‘Go away.’

I am not to be put off from a kind action merely by rudeness. It took me some time to persuade Badger (*a*) that he wanted a boat and (*b*) that this was the kind of boat he wanted. But I did it.

The following Saturday afternoon saw Badger and Mrs. Badger, and Mr. Thompson and me, aboard the *Bluebell*, and Mr. Thompson hoisting the sails for inspection. And from the shore the three old ferrymen greedily observed us. Mr. Thompson was a dismal young man, who had arrived from a neighbouring suburb on a motor bicycle, evidently hated all boats, and loathed the *Bluebell* with a deadly loathing.

I had warned Badger not to be too particular about the sails, for sails can be repaired or

replaced, and the hull (if sound) was worth the money alone.

The sails, as they went up, showed how right I had been. They hung, like the tatters of a stage beggar, flapping picturesquely in the breeze.

We turned our gaze downwards, where a sheet of water lapped about our boots. Badger knows nothing about the boat trade, and he kept on asking direct unwarrantable questions, such as 'Does she leak?' Mr. Thompson said there had been a great deal of rain lately and guaranteed that all the water in the boat was rain. We sat and stared at it, trying to gauge if it was rising or not. Mrs. Badger inclined to the opinion that it was, but she knows nothing about boats.

I suggested to Badger in a whisper that he should offer Mr. Thompson five pounds for the *Bluebell*, subject to her being 'tight', as to which we should have to satisfy ourselves during the week. Mr. Thompson replied sourly that he had no time to waste; that he could not come to Chiswick *every* Saturday; that he would sell the boat for ten pounds; that he would be losing twenty pounds at that; that maybe some of the upper seams were a little dry; that there had been much sunshine lately, but——

At this point Badger, who knows nothing

BUYING A BOAT

about boats, plunged his hand into the water and pulled from the *Bluebell's* frame a large strip of tow.

The water rose like a flood. The boat began to sink. We left her rapidly.

Mr. Thompson mounted his motor-bicycle and crossly rode away.

By this time the whole waterside knew that the property in the *Bluebell* was *not* to pass. Old Joe approached me, confidential and obsequious.

'If I were *you*, sir,' he said, 'I wouldn't have nothing to do with that boat, sir. I wouldn't say this to every one, sir, but I'm speaking to you as a friend. She's rotten, that's what she is. What we calls "nail-sick", sir. "Nail-sick", he repeated with enjoyment. 'There's not a sound plank in 'er. But she's that plugged up with putty and tow and red lead an' all, so's a gentleman like you wouldn't know the difference, I dare say. Rotten, that's what she is,' he continued with enthusiasm. 'I've known that boat for forty years, sir. Mr. Potts give fifty pounds for 'er. An' after that Mr. Davids' 'ad 'er for a bit—Mr. Davids at the brewery. 'E give twenty, and 'e sold 'er for nine——'

'What did Mr. Thompson give for her?' I inquired curiously.

‘ She was left to ’im in a will,’ said Joe.
‘ A legacy, like.’

‘ Ah ! ’ I said. ‘ It’s funny, Joe, you didn’t tell me all this the other day.’

But old Joe did not seem to hear.

‘ Well, sir,’ he said, ‘ don’t say I didn’t warn you. I’m surprised,’ he added, ‘ at a gentleman like you wasting your time over a boat like ’er.’

‘ Yes,’ I said, ‘ that’s funny too.’

(1928)

III. THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

JOHAN ANTONY GRUNCH was one of the mildest, most innocent men I ever knew. He had a wife to whom he was devoted with a dog-like devotion ; he went to church ; he was shy and reserved, and he held a mediocre position in a firm of envelope-makers in the City. But he had a romantic soul, and whenever the public craving for envelopes fell off—and that is seldom—he used to allay his secret passion for danger, devilry and excitement by writing sensational novels. One of these was recently published, and John Antony is now dead. The novel did it.

Yet it was a very mild sort of ‘shocker,’ about a very ordinary murder. The villain simply slew one of his typists in the counting-house with a sword-umbrella and concealed his guilt by putting her in a pillar-box. But it had ‘power’, and it was very favourably reviewed. One critic said that ‘the author, who was obviously a woman, had treated with singular delicacy and feeling the ever-urgent problem of female employment in our great industrial centres’. Another said that the book was ‘a brilliant burlesque of the fashionable

type of detective fiction '. Another wrote that ' it was a conscientious analysis of a perplexing phase of agricultural life '. John thought that must refer to the page where he had described the allotments at Shepherd's Bush. But he was pleased and surprised by what they said.

What he did *not* like was the interpretation offered by his family and his friends, who at once decided that the work was the autobiography of John Antony. You see, the scene was laid in London, and John lived in London ; the murdered girl was a typist, and there were two typists in John's office ; and, to crown all, the villain in the book had a boar-hound, and John himself had a Skye terrier. The thing was as plain as could be. Men he met in the City said, ' How's that boar-hound of yours ? ' or ' I like that bit where you hit the policeman. When did you do that ? ' ' *You* ', mark you. Old friends took him aside and whispered, ' Very sorry to hear you don't hit it off with Mrs. Grunch ; I always thought you were such a happy couple.' His wife's family said, ' Poor Gladys ! what a life she must have had ! ' His own family said, ' Poor John ! what a life she must have led him to make him go off with that adventuress ! ' Several people identified the adventuress as Miss Crook, the Secretary

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

of the local Mothers' Welfare League, of which John was a vice-president.

The fog of suspicion swelled and spread and penetrated into every cranny and level of society. No servants would come near the house, or if they did they soon stumbled on a copy of the shocker while doing the drawing-room, read it voraciously and rushed screaming out of the front door. When he took a parcel of washing to the post-office the officials refused to accept it until he had opened it and shown that there were no bodies in it.

The animal kingdom is very sensitive to the suspicion of guilt. John noticed that dogs avoided him, horses neighed at him, earwigs fled from him in horror, caterpillars madly spun themselves into cocoons as he approached, owls hooted, snakes hissed. Only Mrs. Grunch remained faithful.

But one morning at breakfast Mrs. Grunch said, 'Pass the salt, please, John.' John didn't hear. He was reading a letter. Mrs. Grunch said again, 'Pass the salt, please, John.' John was still engrossed. Mrs. Grunch wanted the salt pretty badly, so she got up and fetched it. As she did so she noticed that the handwriting of the letter was the handwriting of A Woman. Worse, it was written on the embossed paper of the Mothers' Welfare League. It must be

from Miss Crook. *And it was.* It was about the annual outing. 'Ah, ha !' said Mrs. Grunch. (I am afraid that 'Ah, ha !' doesn't really convey to you the sort of sound she made, but you must just imagine.) 'Ah, ha ! So *that's* why you couldn't pass the salt !'

Mad with rage, hatred, fear, chagrin, pique, jealousy and indigestion, John rushed out of the house and went to the office. At the door of the office he met one of the typists. He held the door open for her. She simpered and refused to go in front of him. Being still mad with rage, hatred, chagrin and all those other things, John made a cross gesture with his umbrella. With a shrill, shuddering shriek of 'Murderer !' the girl cantered violently down Ludgate Hill and was never seen again. Entering the office, John found two detectives waiting to ask him a few questions in connection with the Newcastle Pig-sty Murder, which had been done with some pointed instrument, probably an umbrella.

After that *The Daily Horror* rang up and asked if he would contribute an article to their series on 'Is Bigamy Worth While ?'

Having had enough rushing for one day John walked slowly out into the street, trying to remember the various ways in which his characters had committed suicide. He threw

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

himself over the Embankment wall into the river, but fell in a dinghy which he had not noticed ; he bought some poison, but the chemist recognized his face from a photograph in the Literary Column of *The Druggist* and gave him ipecacuanha (none of you can spell that) ; he thought of cutting his throat, but broke his thumb-nail trying to open the big blade, and gave it up. Desperate, he decided to go home. At Victoria he was hustled along the platform on the pretence that there is more room in the rear of trains. Finally he was hustled on to the line and electrocuted.

And everybody said, ' So it *was* true.'

(1921)

IV. PHILOSOPHY

HOW are you, Milly? As for me,
Oh, well, we mustn't grumble ;
Things isn't what they used to be,
But there, we mustn't grumble ;
Poor Albert's out of work again,
My Lizzie's got her favourite pain,
And don't it make you sick, this rain ?
But there, we mustn't grumble.

*It's no use hollering until you're burning,
It's an ill wind that don't blow no one good,
It's a long lane that hasn't any turning ;
I've got my health and spirits—touching wood.
We oughter won a thousand pounds from that there
Guessing Game,
I guessed the horses right enough and Albert sent the
claim,
And now it seems he's been and gone and never signed
his name !
But there, we mustn't grumble.*

The landlord's playing up a treat,
But there, we mustn't grumble.
Well, says he'll turn us on the street ;
But there, we mustn't grumble ;

PHILOSOPHY

Of course, what I'd put by is spent,
And all I've got to pay the rent
Is twopence—one of which is bent,
But there, we mustn't grumble.

*I never hold with worrying and whining,
Well, what I say is what must be must be,
And every cloud has got a silver lining,
Though now and then it's very hard to see.*

These little things are only sent to try us, don't they say?

*Poor Albert's been to Epsom backing winners all the day,
And every time his horse came in, his bookie went away—*

But there, we mustn't grumble.

So Maud's expecting? Is that so?

Oh, well, we mustn't grumble.

Six is a lot—I ought to know—

But there, we mustn't grumble.

There's one or two with eight or nine,
There's some as sits and sips their wine
And wish they'd had a few of mine—

So there, we mustn't grumble.

It might be snowing if it wasn't raining;

We've plenty to be thankful for, I mean.

*When Albert starts his cursing and complaining
I always say, 'Well, look what might have been!'*

A. P. HERBERT

*They're taking all my teeth out, but the dentist's very
kind,*

*Well, what I say, we might have all been deaf and
dumb and blind,*

*And we've never had the house on fire, that I can call
to mind,*

So there, we mustn't grumble.

(1930)

V. THE ART OF POETRY

I

MANY people have said to me, 'I wish I could write poems. I often try, but——' They mean, I gather, that the impulse, the creative itch, is in them, but they don't know how to satisfy it. My own position is that I know how to write poetry, but I can't be bothered. I have not got the itch. The least I can do, however, is to try to help those who have.

A mistake commonly committed by novices is to make up their minds what it is they are going to say before they begin. This is superfluous effort, tending to cramp the style. It is permissible, if not essential, to select a *subject*—say, MUD—but any detailed argument or plan which may restrict the free development of metre and rhyme (if any) is to be discouraged.

With that understanding, let us now write a poem about MUD.

I should begin in this sort of way :

Mud, mud,
Nothing but mud,
O my God !

It will be seen at once that we are not going to have much rhyme in this poem ; or if we do we shall very soon be compelled to strike a sinister note, because almost the only rhymes to *mud* are *blood* and *flood* ; while, as the authors of our hymns have discovered, there are very few satisfactory rhymes to *God*. They shamefully evaded the difficulty by using words like *road*, but in first-class poetry one cannot do that. On the whole, therefore, this poem had better be *vers libre*. That will take much less time and be more dramatic, without plunging us into a flood of blood or anything drastic like that. We now go on with a little descriptive business :

Into the sunset, swallowing up the sun,
Crawling, creeping,
The naked flats——

Now there ought to be a verb. That is the worst of *vers libre* ; one gets carried away by beautiful phrases and is brought up suddenly by a complete absence of verbs. However at a pinch one can do without a verb ; that is the best of *vers libre* :

Amber and gold,
Deep-stained in mystery
And the colours of mystery,
Inapprehensible,
Golden like wet-gold,

THE ART OF POETRY

Amber like a woman of Arabia
That has in her breast
The forsaken treasures of old Time,
Love and Destruction,
Oblivion and Decay,
And immemorial tins,
 Tin upon tin,
Old boots and bottles that hold no more
Their richness in them.
And I——

We might do a good deal more of this
descriptive business, bringing in something
about dead bodies, mud of course being full
of dead bodies. But we had better get on.
We strike now the personal note :

And I,
I too am no more than a bottle,
 An empty bottle,
Heaving helpless on the mud of life,
Without a label and without a cork,
Empty I am, yet no man troubles
 To return me.
 And why ?
Because there is not sixpence on me.
 Bah !
The sun goes down,
 The birds wheel home,
But I remain here,
Drifting empty under the night,
 Drifting——

When one is well away with this part of
the poem it is almost impossible to stop. When

you are writing in metre you come eventually to the eighth line of the last verse and you have to stop ; but in *vers libre* you have no assistance of that kind. This particular poem is being written for instructional purposes in a journal of limited capacity, so it will probably have to stop fairly soon ; but in practice it would go on for a long time yet. In any case, however, it would end in the same way, like this :

Mud, mud,
Nothing but mud,
O, my God !

That reasserts, you see, in a striking manner, the original *motif*, and somehow expresses in a few words the poignant melancholy of the whole poem. Another advantage in finishing a long poem, such as this would be, in the same way as you began it is that it makes it clear to the reader that he is still reading the same poem. Sometimes, and especially in *vers libre* of an emotional and digressive character, the reader has a hideous fear that he has turned over two pages and got into another poem altogether. This little trick reassures him ; and if you are writing *vers libre* you must not lose any legitimate opportunity of reassuring the reader.

To treat the same theme in metre and rhyme

will be a much more difficult matter. The great thing will be to avoid having *mud* at the end of a line, for the reasons already given. We had better have long ten-syllable lines, and we had better have four of them in each verse. Gray wrote an elegy in that metre which has given general satisfaction. We will begin :

As I came down through Chintonbury Hole
The tide rolled out from Wurzel to the sea,

In a serious poem of this kind it is essential to establish a locality atmosphere at once ; therefore one mentions a few places by name to show that one has been there. If the reader has been there too he will like the poem, and if he hasn't no harm is done. The only thing is that locally Chintonbury is probably pronounced Chun'bury, in which case it will not scan. One cannot be too careful about that sort of thing. However, as an illustration, Chintonbury will serve.

It is now necessary to show somehow in this verse that the poem is about mud ; it is also necessary to organize a rhyme for *Hole* and a rhyme for *sea*, and of the two this is the more important. I shall do it like this :

And like the unclothèd levels of my soul
The yellow mud lay mourning nakedly.

There is a good deal to be said against these two lines. For one thing I am not sure that the mud ought to be yellow ; it will remind people of Covent Garden Tube Station, and no one wants to be reminded of that. However, it does suggest the inexpressible biliousness of the theme.

I think *levels* is a little weak. It is a good poetical word and doesn't mean anything in particular ; but we have too many words of that kind in this verse. *Deserts* would do, except that deserts and mud don't go very well together. However, that sort of point must be left to the individual writer.

At first sight the student may think that *nakedly* is not a good rhyme for *sea*. Nor is it. If you do that kind of thing in comic poetry no Editor will give you money. But in serious poetry it is quite legitimate ; in fact it is rather encouraged. That is why serious poetry is so much easier than comic poetry. In my next lecture I shall deal with comic poetry.

I don't think I shall finish this poem now. The fact is, I am not feeling so inspired as I was. It is very hot. Besides, I have got hay-fever and keep on sneezing. Constant sneezing knocks all the inspiration out of a man. At the same time a tendency to hay-fever is a sign of intellect and culture, and all the great poets

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were martyrs to it. That is why none of them grew very lyrical about hay. Corn excited them a good deal, and even straw, but hay hardly ever.

So the student must finish this poem as best he can, and I shall be glad to consider and criticize what he does, though I may say at once that there will be no prize. It ought to go on for another eight verses or so, though that is not essential in these days, for if it simply won't go on it can just stop in the middle. Only then it must be headed 'MUD : A Fragment.'

And in any case, in the bottom left-hand corner, the student must write :

' Chintonbury, May 28th, 1920.'

II

In this lecture I propose to explain how comic poetry is written.

Comic poetry, as I think I pointed out in my last lecture, is much more difficult than serious poetry, because there are all sorts of rules. In serious poetry there are practically no rules, and what rules there are may be shattered with impunity as soon as they become at all inconvenient. Rhyme, for instance. A well-known poet once wrote a poem which ran like this :

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“ Hands, do as you’re bid,
Draw the balloon of the mind
That bellies and sags in the wind
Into its narrow shed.”

This was printed in a serious paper ; but if the poet had sent it up to a humorous paper (as he might well have done) the Editor would have said, ‘ Do you pronounce it *shid* ? ’ and the poet would have had no answer. You see, he started out, as serious poets do, with every intention of organizing a good rhyme for *bid*—or perhaps for *shed*—but he found this was more difficult than he expected. And then, no doubt, somebody drove all his cattle on to his croquet-lawn, or somebody else’s croquet-lawn, and he abandoned the struggle. I shouldn’t complain of that ; what I do complain of is the *deceitfulness* of the whole thing. If a man can’t find a better rhyme than *shed* for a simple word like *bid*, let him give up the idea of having a rhyme at all ; let him write

Hands, do as you’re TOLD,
or
Into its narrow HUT (or even HANGAR).

That at least would be an honest confession of failure. But to write *bid* and *shed* is simply a sinister attempt to gain credit for writing a rhymed poem *without doing it at all*.

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Well, that kind of thing is not allowed in comic poetry. When I opened my well-known military epic, 'Riddles of the King', with the couplet :

Full dress (with decorations) will be worn
When General Officers are shot at dawn.

the Editor wrote cuttingly in the margin, 'Do you say *dorn* ?'

The correct answer would have been, of course, 'Well, as a matter of fact I do' ; but you cannot make answers of that kind to Editors ; they don't understand it. And that brings you to the real drawback of comic poetry ; it means constant truck with Editors. But I must not be drawn into a discussion about them. In a special lecture—two special lectures—— Quite.

The lowest form of comic poetry is, of course, the Limerick ; but it is a mistake to suppose that it is the easiest. It is more difficult to finish a Limerick than to finish anything in the world. You see, in a Limerick you cannot begin :

There was an old man of West *Ham*
and go on

Who formed an original *plan*,

finishing the last line with *limb* or *hen* or *bun*. A serious writer could do that with impunity, and indeed with praise, but the more exacting traditions of Limerical composition insist that, having fixed on *Ham* as the end of the first line, you must find two other rhymes to *Ham*, and good rhymes too. This is why there is so large a body of uncompleted Limericks. For many years I have been trying to finish the following unfinished masterpiece :

There was a young man who said ‘ *Hell* !
I don’t think I feel very well——’

That was composed on the Gallipoli Peninsula ; in fact it was composed under fire ; indeed I remember now that we were going over the top at the time. But in the quiet days of Peace I can get no further with it. It only shows how much easier it is to begin a Limerick than to end it.

Apart from the subtle phrasing of the second line this poem is noteworthy because it is cast in the classic form. All the best Limericks are about a young man, or else an old one, who said some short sharp monosyllable in the first line. For example :

There was a young man who said ‘ *If*——

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Now what are the rhymes to *if*? Looking up my *Rhyming Dictionary* I see they are :

cliff	hieroglyph	hippogriff
skiff	sniff stiff	tiff whiff

Of these one may reject *hippogriff* at once, as it is in the wrong metre. *Hieroglyph* is attractive, and we might do worse than :

There was a young man who said ' If
One murdered a hieroglyph——

Having, however, no very clear idea of the nature of a hieroglyph I am afraid that this will also join the long list of unfinished masterpieces. Personally I should incline to something of this kind :

There was a young man who said ' If
I threw myself over a cliff
I do not believe
One person would grieve——'

Now the last line is going to be very difficult. The tragic loneliness, the utter disillusion of this young man is so vividly outlined in the first part of the poem that to avoid an anti-climax a really powerful last line is required. *But there are no powerful rhymes.* A serious poet, of course, could finish up with *death* or *faith*, or some powerful word like that. But we are

limited to *skiff*, *sniff*, *tiff* and *whiff*. And what can you do with those? Students, I hope, will see what they can do. My own tentative solution is printed, by arrangement with the Publisher, on another page (37). I do not pretend that it is perfect; in fact it seems to me to strike rather a vulgar note. At the same time it is copyright, and must not be set to music in the U.S.A.

I have left little time for comic poetry other than Limericks, but most of the above profound observations are equally applicable to both, except that in the case of the former it is usual to think of the *last* line first. Having done that you think of some good rhymes to the last line and hang them up in mid-air, so to speak. Then you think of something to say which will fit on to those rhymes. It is just like Limericks, only you start at the other end; indeed it is much easier than Limericks, though, I am glad to say, nobody believes this. If they did it would be even harder to get money out of Editors than it is already.

We will now write a comic poem about Spring Cleaning. We will have verses of six lines, five ten-syllable lines and one six-syllable. As a last line for the first verse I suggest

Where have they put my hat?

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We now require two rhymes to *hat*. In the present context *flat* will obviously be one, and *cat* or *drat* will be another.

Our resources at present are therefore as follows :

Line 1—
„ 2— . . . flat.
„ 3—
„ 4— . . . cat or drat.
„ 5—
„ 6—Where have they put my hat?

As for the blank lines, *wife* is certain to come in sooner or later, and we had better put that down, supported by *life* (‘ What a life ! ’), and *knife* or *strife*. There are no other rhymes, except *rife*, which is a useless word.

We now hold another parade :

Terumti—umti—umti—umti—wife,
Terumti—umti—umti—umti—flat ;
Teroodle—oodle—oodle—What a life !
Terumti—oodle—umti—oodle—cat (or drat) ;
Teroodle—umti—oodle—umti—knife (or strife) ;
Where have they put my hat ?

All that remains now is to fill in the umti-oodles, and I can’t be bothered to do that. There is nothing in it.

III

In this lecture I shall deal with the production of Lyrics, Blank Verse and (if I am allowed) Hymns (Ancient and Modern).

First we will write a humorous lyric for the Stage, bearing in mind, of course, the peculiar foibles, idiosyncrasies and whims of Mr. Alf Bubble, who will sing it (we hope). Mr. Bubble's principal source of fun is the personal appearance of his fellow-citizens. Whenever a new character comes on the stage he makes some remark about the character's 'face'. Whenever he does this the entire audience rolls about on its seat, and cackles and gurgles and wipes its eyes, and repeats in a hoarse whisper, with variations of its own, the uproarious phrasing of Mr. Bubble's remark. If Mr. Bubble says, 'But look at his *face*!' the audience, fearful lest its neighbours may have missed the cream of the thing, splutters hysterically in the intervals of eye-wiping and coughing and choking and sneezing, 'He said, "*What* a face!"' or 'He said, "*Did you see* his face?"' or 'He said, "*Is it a face*?"'

All this we have got to remember when we are writing a lyric for Mr. Bubble. Why Mr. Bubble of all people should find so much mirth in other men's faces I can't say, but there it is.

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If we write a song embodying this great joke we may be certain that it will please Mr. Bubble ; so we will do it.

Somebody, I think, will have made some slighting remark about the Government, and that will give the cue for the first verse, which will be political.

We will begin :

Thompson . . .

I don't know why the people in humorous lyrics are always called Thompson (or Brown), but they are.

Thompson, being indigent,
Thought that it was time he went
Into England's Parliament,
To earn his daily bread . . .

That is a joke against Parliament, you see—Payment of Members and all that ; it is good. At the same time, it is usual to reserve one's jokes for the chorus. The composer, you see, reserves his tune for the chorus, and, if the author puts too much into the verse, there will be trouble between their Unions.

Now we introduce the *face-motif* :

¹ SOLUTION : It comes of my having a sniff. (See page 34).

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Thompson's features were not neat ;
When he canvassed dahn our street
Things were said I won't repeat,
And my old moth-ah said :

This verse, you notice, is both in metre and rhyme ; I don't know how that has happened ; it ought not to be.

Now we have the chorus :

‘ Oh, Mr. Thompson,
It isn't any good ;
I shouldn't like to vote for you,
So I won't pretend I should ;
I know that you're the noblest
Of all the human race . . . ’

That shows the audience that *face* is coming very soon, and they all get ready to burst themselves.

‘ I haven't a doubt, if you get in,
The Golden Age will soon begin—
But I DON'T LIKE—your FACE.’

At this point several of the audience will simply slide off their seats on to the floor and wallow about there, snorting.

The next verse had better be a love-verse.

Thompson wooed a lovely maid
Every evening in the shade,
Meaning, I am much afraid,
To hide his ugly head . . .

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Head is not very good, I admit, but we must have *said* in the last line, and as we were mad enough to have rhymes in the first verse we have got to go on with it.

But when he proposed one night—
Did it by electric light—
Mabel, who retained her sight,
Just looked at him and said :

Now you see the idea ?

‘ Oh, Mr. Thompson,
It isn’t any good ;
I shouldn’t like to marry you,
So I won’t pretend I should ;
I know that you have riches
And a house in Eaton Place . . .

(Here all the audience pulls out its handkerchief)

I haven’t a doubt that you must be
The properest possible match for me,
But I DON’T LIKE—your FACE.’

I have got another verse to this song, but I will not give it to you now, as I think the Editor is rather bored with it. It is fortunate for Mr. Bubble that he does not have to perform before an audience of Editors.

Having written the lyric, the next thing to do is to get a composer to compose music for it ; and then you get it published. This is most

difficult, as composers are people who don't ever keep appointments, and music publishers like locking up lyrics in drawers till the mice have got at the chorus and the whole thing is out of date.

By the time that this song is ready Mr. Bubble may quite possibly have exhausted the *face-motif* altogether and struck a new vein. Then we shall have wasted our labour. In that case we will arrange to have it buried in somebody's grave (Mr. Bubble's for choice), and in A.D. 2000 it will be dug up by antiquaries and deciphered. Even a lyric like this may become an Old Manuscript in time. I ought to add that I myself have composed the music for this lyric, but I really cannot undertake to explain composing as well as poetry.

The serious lyric or Queen's Hall ballad is a much easier affair. But I must first warn the student that there are some peculiar customs attaching to this traffic which may at first sight appear discouraging. When you have written a good lyric and induced some one to compose a tune for it your first thought will be, 'I will get Mr. Throstle to sing this, and he will pay me a small fee or royalty per performance'; and this indeed would be a good arrangement to make. The only objection is that Mr. Throstle, so far from paying any

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money to the student, will expect to be paid about fifty pounds by the student for singing his lyric. I do not know the origin of this quaint old custom, but the student had better not borrow any money on the security of his first lyric.

For a serious or Queen's Hall lyric all that is necessary is to think of some natural objects like the sun, the birds, the flowers or the trees, mention them briefly in the first verse and then in the second verse draw a sort of analogy or comparison between the natural object and something to do with love. The verses can be extremely short, since in this class of music the composer is allowed to spread himself indefinitely and can eke out the tiniest words.

Here is a perfect lyric I have written. It is called, quite simply, *Evening* :

Sunshine in the forest,
Blossom on the tree,
And all the brave birds singing
For you—and me.

Kisses in the sunshine,
Laughter in the dew,
And all the brave world singing
For me—and you.

I see now that the dew has got into the second verse, so it had better be called, quite simply, *Dawn*.

You notice the artistic parallelism of this lyric ; I mean, ' The brave birds singing ' in one verse and ' The brave *world* singing ' in the next. That is a tip I got from Hebrew poetry, especially the Psalms : ' One day telleth another ; and one night certifieth another,' and so on. It is a useful trick to remember, and is employed freely by many modern writers, the author of ' The King's Regulations ', for example, who in Regulation 1680 has the fine line :

' Disembarkations are carried out in a similar manner to embarkations.'

That goes well to the Chant in C major by Mr. P. Humphreys.

But I am wandering. It is becoming clear to me now that I shall not have time to do Blank Verse or Hymns (Ancient and Modern) in this lecture, after all, so I will give you a rough outline of that special kind of lyric, the Topical Song. All that is required for this class of work is a good refrain or central idea ; when you have got that, you see how many topics you can tack on to it. But if you can tack on Mr. Winston Churchill you need not bother about the others.

Our central idea will be ' Rations ', and the song will be called ' Heaps and Heaps ' :

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Now Jimmy Brown

(always begin like that)

Now Jimmy Brown

He went to town,
But all the people said,
' We're rationed in our jam, you know,
Likewise our cheese and bread ;
But we've lots of politicians
And Ministers galore,
We've got enough of them and, gee !
We don't want any more.'

Chorus.

We've had heaps and heaps and heaps of Mr. SMILLIE
(Loud cheers.) ;

We've had heaps and heaps and heaps of our M.P.
(Significant chuckles) ;

At political carouses

We've had heaps of (paper) houses
But though we WAIT, no houses do we SEE (Bitter
laughter).

The khaki-boys were good enough for fighting,
But now we hear the khaki-coat is barred ;

If they ration us in Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL,
Why, any one may have my ration-card ! (Uproar.)

All you have to do now is to work in some
more topics. I don't think I shall do any more
now. The truth is that that verse has rather
taken it out of me.

I feel all barren.

(1921)

VI. MR. HONEYBUBBLE MEETS HIS MATCH

FROM the moment that Mr. Honeybubble first 'cottoned to me' I longed that he should meet and be attracted by some passenger more worthy of his steel, that I might myself retire into private life. There must surely, I thought, among so many passengers be somebody aboard who could give him bore for bore, so to speak, and enjoy it.

But, curiously enough, when this great thing happened, when the man was found and I could have had at least an hour off, I was so fascinated by the spectacle that I lingered, a willing victim, to see these giants engage, as it were, across my body.

The man was an American citizen, though so little like the Americans I know and admire, and so much like a parody American, that at first I thought he must be pretending. But I believe him to be real. He had a voice like a saxophone, and perhaps it was Honeybubble's voice, which is like a circular saw, that attracted him ; for he entered that wilderness which Honeybubble had already created about him in the smoking-room and asked if

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one of us would make a fourth at Bridge with Colonel Philpott and another. Honeybubble had told me the previous day that he scarcely knew the rules of Bridge, but with his innate goodness of heart said he was willing to oblige. While they were waiting for the other two to appear the American sat down and talked.

‘My name’s Rooney,’ he said, ‘Ezra P. Rooney, of Chicago.’

‘You’re an American, sir?’ said Honeybubble intelligently.

‘Yes, sir, I’m an Amurrican citizen.’

‘My name’s Honeybubble. This is my friend, Mr. Haddock.’

‘Glad to know you, Mr. Honeybubble. Mr. Haddock, I’m vurry pleased to make your acquaintance.’

‘How d’you do, sir?’ I said—and a sadly feeble response it sounded.

‘It’s very foggy outside,’ said Honeybubble.

It was then that Mr. Rooney let fall the remark which showed me he was a match for Honeybubble—a perfect match. The fog was, in fact, dense. The *Cecic* had been steaming slow for two or three hours, scarcely moving, with a prolonged blast of the siren every two minutes ; so that every one on board was nearly mad with it, coming as it usually did half-way through a man’s favourite joke.

‘Yes, sir,’ said Mr. Rooney, ‘it’s vurry thick. But we have a vurry careful Captain. Our Captain, sir, is a man that knows his business. You see how it is, sir,’ he went on solemnly, as one explaining a difficult point to a child. ‘It seems to you, maybe, as how we’re wasting time, moving the way we are. But you’ll understand, if our Captain was to go right ahead in this fog and another vessel was to cross our bows, by God, sir, we’d have a collision.’

He shook his head gravely, as if to let this sink in. And then they settled down to bore each other. Neither of them, I gladly found, took the smallest notice of me.

I must say that Honeybubble, true to his kindly character, did make some pretence of keeping it a conversation, and even of being interested in what the other fellow said. But Rooney was guilty of no such insincerity. He looked on Honeybubble entirely as a target—mere word-fodder.

‘I’ve often wondered,’ said Honeybubble, ‘whether it wouldn’t be possible to get rid of fog at sea by firing off big guns. A friend of mine who was in the War—a colonel he was, Colonel Bates—no, that wasn’t his name—bless me, I’ll forget my own name next. Well, it’s of no consequence—yes, Bates it was,

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Colonel Bates—and he told me that there was never any fog in Flanders in the middle of a battle whatever there might be at the beginning, if you understand me. Now, it seems to me that if they were to apply that notion to the sea——’

‘That’s a vurry remarkable speculation,’ said Mr. Rooney, and instantly dismissed it from his mind. ‘I noticed a lot more women smoking in public in London. I don’t know how it strikes you, gentlemen, but it seemed to me that more women had cigarettes hanging out of their faces than they did last Fall when I was over. And I’m not going to conceal from you, gentlemen, that I don’t like to see it.’

Mr. Rooney was puffing at a huge cigar.

‘My mother smokes,’ said Mr. Honeybubble surprisingly. ‘And, what I always say——’

The siren, blasting terribly, concluded the remark.

‘Well, sir, that’s a vurry interesting point of view,’ retorted Rooney, not waiting to hear what Honeybubble always said. ‘Maybe your mother’s a nervous woman, and it’s no concern of mine how Mrs. Honeybubble conciliates her nervous system. But I have two daughters and they don’t smoke any. In the United States, sir, we put our women on a pedestal, and, by God, sir, we expect them to stay on it.’

‘What I always say,’ said Honeybubble, going back easily to where he was before, ‘is, let them smoke in the home if they must, but when they’re in a public place—well, it’s a different thing entirely ; or, if it isn’t, it ought to be. That’s my opinion, and I think you’ll find it’s the opinion of the majority of Englishmen, though, of course, we can only speak for ourselves, all of us. What do you say, Mr. Rooney?’

‘I had a vurry poor night last night,’ said Mr. Rooney, as if Mr. Honeybubble’s remarks had never been ; and he yawned expansively to emphasize the poorness of the night. ‘A vurry poor night indeed. It’s a vurry curious thing, gentlemen, I never seem to sleep so well on the starboard side of a boat. Put me on the port side of any steam-vessel you like to name, Amurrican or British, and I’ll register my nine hours as easy and peaceful as a young child. But when you see me located on the starboard side, Mr. Honeybubble, you can be durned sure that I’m tossing and turning in that bunk till four or five every morning of the transit. Now how do you account for that, gentlemen?’

‘I dare say it’s something to do with the ship’s motion,’ suggested Mr. Honeybubble readily, not caring how he accounted for it as

long as he got the lead in his hand. 'It's funny you should mention that, Mr. Rooney,' he went on quickly, 'because as I was saying to Mr. Haddock this afternoon there was a lot of running and trampling on the deck last night, right over my head—the sailors, I suppose ; I don't know if you found the same. Well, as I was saying to Mr. Haddock, it isn't as if this was a cargo boat, one could understand it then, but with a lot of first-class passengers trying to get to sleep it's a wonder people are not more considerate. And could I get off, Mr. Rooney? Not if you'd offered me a fortune. Well, I did as I always do ; I got out of bed and sponged the back of my neck—that's a very old remedy my father taught me—I got into bed again, I put my pillow under the knees, and *that* was no use—well, what did I do then?'

Mr. Honeybubble paused but an instant for breath, and Mr. Rooney, who for some time had been showing signs of impatience, said immediately :

'I'm reading a vurry inspiring volume at the present time, Mr. Honeybubble : the Life and Enthoosiasms of Hercules B. Podd, late Chairman of the New York City and Federal Philanthropic Alliance. Now there, gentlemen, you had a man of big ideals, big, lovely, juicy,

cracker-jack ideals ; a man of the people, sir ; a man that had his cultivated side, but above all, sir, a man that stood for ideals, a man that put country before party, sir ; ideals was his life, ideals was his eat and drink ; a man, Mr. Honeybubble, who stood by the Democratic Party till the bosses stabbed him in the back ; a man, Mr. Honeybubble——'

I saw Honeybubble open his mouth to explain, I imagine, what further steps he had taken to correct his sleeplessness. And then the battle became too much for me, I suppose ; I must have sunk into some swoon or slumber. For after that I heard nothing more very clearly. Outside in the fog the siren blared each minute, shaking the ship, and within those voices, not less vibrant, sounded interminably. Between the two combatants I lay in a fitful dream, as wearied soldiers sleep upon a battlefield and hear the shots fly over.

Stray disconnected fragments from the conflict penetrated my mind, such as :

'Yes, sir, you may take it from me the continent of Yurup is in a vurry unsettled condition.'

' . . . things are very different to what they were twenty years ago. . . . '

'The man's not living that's going to stand for that bunk twice in a life-time.'

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‘The last time over we saw an ice-berg.’

‘No, sir, I never cared for SHAKESPEARE. . . .’

Hours later (it seemed) I woke and found the Colonel and his friend beside us in the act of apologizing for keeping the table waiting.

‘Colonel, it’s of no consequence,’ said Mr. Rooney, ‘say no more. Mr. Haddock and his friend here have entertained me with a little discussion on politics and literatoor.’

Honeybubble that evening informed me that he liked Mr. Rooney, but found him a little tedious, and in his opinion Mr. Rooney had an irritating voice.

And when I ran into Mr. Rooney next day he said, ‘He’s a rich talker, sir, your friend Mr. What-is-it, but, gosh, he’s no hand at listening!’

(1928)

VII. MR. HONEYBUBBLE IS SCURVILY
TREATED

‘AND what, gentlemen,’ said Mr. Honeybubble, ‘am I to do with that?’

With these words Mr. Honeybubble amazingly drew from the tail-pocket of his tail-coat a quart bottle of whisky, placed it on the table before us and looked from face to face defiantly.

‘Now that, sir,’ said Mr. Rooney very distinctly yet with a certain effort, ‘is a vurry remarkable circumstance.’

It was the last night of the voyage; to-morrow the ship would wake up in quarantine off Staten Island. Already we were in American waters and the bar had been closed; but before it closed Mr. Rooney and others had done their loyal best to ensure that as little as possible of the contaminating liquor should be carried into American waters, whether under seal or not. We sat now, four or five of us, in the smoking-room, round a table on which there were glasses, water-jugs and mineral waters, but nothing worse, and discussed Prohibition. Then in comes Mr. Honeybubble of all people and produces a quart bottle of whisky.

He had confided in me already that he had this portent hidden in the famous green bag. He seldom 'took anything', and did not understand casual drinking, but he did like to have something by him for moments of fatigue or an occasional nip or nightcap before bed ; and such had been his privations on his last trip, he told me, and such was his inborn love of liberty, that he had determined on this occasion to become a smuggler. Even then, though, I had felt the struggle proceeding in his breast between his hereditary love of liberty and his hereditary dislike of being found out. And the nearer the ship came to the fatal shores the less free and the more fearful beat the loyal heart of Mr. Honeybubble. The bottle had begun to frighten him, and now, it appeared, he had taken to carrying it about. He was, it was clear, in an extreme state of nervous indecision.

We all stared at the bottle.

'Pardon the impertinence,' said Mr. Rooney, 'but is that article intended for importation or for consumption on the high seas?'

'To tell you the truth, Mr. Rooney,' said Mr. Honeybubble self-consciously, 'I was thinking of taking it ashore. But I'm wondering now whether perhaps I hadn't better throw it overboard.'

A sort of shiver, an inarticulate protest, ran round the party ; but we respected Honeybubble's scruples, and only Rooney spoke.

' Now that's a vurry debatable prahposition,' he said gravely, ' and, speaking for myself, the answer is emphatic in the negative. Mind you, I don't say that many good citizens haven't jettisoned their liquor to salve their consciences in these waters, but I wouldn't say those gentlemen were objectionably red-blooded, Mr. Honeybubble, and I never heard of a hundred per cent Britisher who went so far. No, sir, not any.'

' Oh, of course, I'm not *afraid*,' said Honeybubble valiantly. ' It's the principle of the thing——'

He glanced timorously about the smoking-room and, though not afraid, dropped a newspaper over the naked bottle.

' *Principle ?* ' roared Rooney tremendously, swelling his chest. ' And what's the first principle and institootion of your great country, Mr. Honeybubble ? Answer me that.'

Honeybubble, quailing before the pointed finger, stuttered nervously. ' It's—er—it's—oh, well, it's law and order, I suppose.'

' Law and order hell, Mr. Honeybubble ! ' said Rooney contemptuously. ' Liberty was the institootion I had in mind. *Liberty, sir.*'

‘Liberty,’ repeated Honeybubble, much impressed. ‘That’s true. Of course it’s awful nonsense all this——’

‘Mr. Honeybubble,’ said Rooney, more gravely than before and with his eye on the bottle, ‘where is the man who has the right to say to you, a free-born Britisher, “Throw that piece of your property into the ocean?” Does that man breathe, Mr. Honeybubble?’

‘He does not,’ the Briton replied. ‘Oh, no; I shall certainly take it ashore. I’ll see ’em damned before they stop me.’ And with these brave words he seized the guilty bottle and was evidently proposing to return it to his tail-pocket.

At this sight the eyes of Mr. Rooney started from his head.

‘One moment, sir,’ he said quickly, holding up his hand. ‘Now don’t misunderstand me, Mr. Honeybubble. I wouldn’t like to have you say that Ezra P. Rooney had handed you a bunch of-trouble.’

‘Trouble? D’you think I’ll have trouble?’ said Honeybubble less bravely.

‘Well, not if they don’t catch you with the goods, of *course*, Mr. Honeybubble. But——’

Mr. Rooney finished with a shrug suggestive of nameless possibilities.

‘ What—what if they do ? ’ quavered Honeybubble.

‘ Well, sir, you’re not forgetting that this is an offence against the enlightened constitootion of my great country. This is no girls’-play, Mr. Honeybubble ; I’ve known men languish in the city jail for half what you’ve got in that bottle. There was a Britisher taken off a boat in New York Harbour last fall and sent to Ellis Island, and died there. Yes, sir.’

At these vivid pictures Mr. Honeybubble paled a little.

‘ Is that a fact ? ’ he said.

‘ Yes, sir.’

‘ Oh, well,’ said Honeybubble vaguely, ‘ it’s not worth—— I think, perhaps, I’ll throw it overboard and have done with it.’

A slight cloud passed over Mr. Rooney’s face, but with an effort he controlled himself and said:

‘ Now don’t get fanatical, Mr. Honeybubble. There’s no need to go to extremes. See here, you’ll need to have a *little* of it with you for your health, and mind you, in these days, supplies being what they are, the man that goes ashore with his hip-pocket absolutely dry is no true friend of the Amurrican people.’

‘ Then you think—— ? ’ said Honeybubble, bewildered. ‘ But I thought you said—— The hip-pocket ? Is it safe ? ’

‘The hip-pocket’s not made,’ said Mr. Rooney, coming out into the open at last, ‘that will look natural and law-abiding with a bottle of those dimensions, Mr. Honeybubble. But, sir, you don’t have to take the *whole* bottle ashore.’

A pleased expression lightened the faces of all present as it seemed that the core of the position was at last made clear. But Honeybubble still looked bewildered.

‘Get your daughter,’ continued Mr. Rooney patiently, ‘to give you a couple of scent-bottles, or throw away your cough-mixture and substitute an emergency ration of the wine of Caledonia, Mr. Honeybubble, and the PRESIDENT himself won’t touch you. Get me, Steve?’

‘I see,’ said Honeybubble brightly. ‘And pour away the rest of it?’

Mr. Rooney sighed heavily, and for a moment I thought that he would abandon the struggle. But he said at last :

‘Well, Mr. Honeybubble, that’s as you please, but I dare say there’s one or two gentlemen here would be willing to save you the exertion of a walk across the deck, if you prefer it. It so happens that I have in my pocket the vurry instrument that seems to be desiderated,’ and, taking from his pocket a

corkscrew he proceeded without further ado to operate on Mr. Honeybubble's bottle.

'I see what you mean,' said Honeybubble, to the general satisfaction. 'But is it allowed?' he went on, with an anxious glance about the room.

'Well, sir,' said Rooney, 'we won't invite the Captain to join us, and we won't shout for the chief steward. Aside from any indiscretion of that nature I don't know that any gentleman here is going to be arrested. So here's to our friend Mr. Honeybubble and the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of Amurrica!'

Together, but silently, we drank this toast.

'Oh, well,' said Honeybubble, beaming, 'if you'll take the responsibility, Mr. Rooney——'

'We will all take a little responsibility,' said Mr. Rooney, helping himself to another; 'and not much soda.'

'Prohibition,' he continued richly at length, 'is a vurry remarkable experiment in the spiritual uplift of a great people, and of incalculable benefit to the toiling masses of our cities. And I am surprised,' he went on, draining his glass for the second time—'I am shocked, Mr. Honeybubble, that you should have contemplated setting your face against the

onward march of ideals to the extent of a whole quart bottle of Scotch—a whole quart ! Fill up, gentlemen——’

‘ Oh but——’ Honeybubble began.

‘ Fill up, gentlemen,’ said Rooney, ignoring him, ‘ and remember the penalties provided by law for the miscreant detected in the importation of liquor. Remember, gentlemen, you stand between our brother Honeybubble and the horrors of incarceration. Don’t spare yourselves, boys ! ’

Fired by this noble appeal for another we again charged Honeybubble’s glass and afterwards our own.

Proceedings from then on became a little wild. Mr. Rooney grew more and more eloquent and dignified, and positively maudlin in his anxiety to save Mr. Honeybubble from trouble at the Customs. That gentleman, on the other hand, grew more and more free and fearless and quite contemptuous of laws. His courage rose as the whisky fell ; the more he drank the more was he prepared to smuggle, till, when the bottle was all but dry, he talked glibly of going ashore with gallons. And finally, I remember, when it became clear that Mr. Honeybubble would not be put to any trouble whatever, Mr. Rooney seized the empty bottle and, remarking, ‘ We will now consign this

incriminating vessel to the deep,' led us all out into the night.

Right ahead was a bright light. We marched in procession three times round the deck, Mr. Rooney singing.

And at last he turned and cried aloud, ' Say, Honeybubble, yonder stands the Statoo of Liberty. And right above it I see the sky-sign, " JAHN P. HONEYBUBBLE—HOSIER AND SMUGGLER ! " ' and solemnly he cast Mr. Honeybubble's bottle into the wine-dark sea.

Then—an unkind cut, I thought—he drew from his hip-pocket a substantial flask, well-filled, and he said, ' Those, Mr. Honeybubble, air the approximate dimensions of the vessel which I had in mind. Get one. Good-night to you.'

And with these words he went to bed.

(1928)

VIII. LINES FOR A WORTHY PERSON
WHO HAS DRIFTED BY ACCIDENT INTO A
CHELSEA REVEL

IT is a very curious fact
That those who write or paint or act,
Compose or etch
Or sculp or sketch,
Or practise things like pottery,
Have not got consciences like us,
Are frankly not monogamous ;
Their moral tone
Is all their own,
Their love-affairs a lottery.
It's hard to say why writing verse
Should terminate in drink or worse,
Why flutes and harps
And flats and sharps
Should lead to indiscretions ;
But if you read the Poets' Lives
You'll find the number of their wives
In fact exceeds
The normal needs
Of almost all professions.

*As my poor father used to say
In 1863,*

A. P. HERBERT

*Once people start on all this Art
Good-bye, moralitee !
And what my father used to say
Is good enough for me.*

Oh, may no little child of mine
Compose or model, draw, design,
And sit at ease
On people's knees,
With other odious habits !
See what eccentric things they wear,
Observe their odd un-English hair—
The women bald,
The men (so-called)
As thickly furred as rabbits !
Not these the kind of people who
Were prominent at Waterloo,
Not this the stock
Which stood the shock
When Kaiser picked his quarrel.
Let Dagoes paint and write and sing,
But Art is not an English thing ;
Better be pure
And die obscure
Than famous but immoral !

*As my poor father used to say
In 1863,
Once people start on all this Art
Farewell, monogamee !*

LINES FOR A WORTHY PERSON

*And what my father used to say,
And what my father used to say,
Is good enough for me.*

And shall we let this canker stick
Inside the body politic ?
Oh, let us take
Some steps to make
Our messy nation cleaner !
The whole is greater than the part,
We should at once prohibit Art,
Let Music be
A felony
And Verse a misdemeanour ;
Let long-haired gentlemen who draw
Be segregated by the law,
And every bard
Do six months' hard
Who lyrically twaddles,
But licences be issued to
A few selected curates, who
Shall fashion odes
In serious modes
On statutory models.

*As my poor father used to say
In 1863,
Once people start on all this Art
Farewell, moralitee !*

A. P. HERBERT

*And what my father used to say,
And what my father used to say,
And what my father used to say,
Is good enough for me.*

(1930)

IX. THE BARGAIN COUNTER

‘**T**HANK you, Madam ; pay at the desk, please. Good morning, madam—My dear, what a crush ! Like flies, aren’t they ? Well, my dear, I wanted to tell you, it’s all up, Arthur and me, I mean. We had a scene last night, such a scene, well, scene’s not the word —Cami-bockers ? No, madam ; straight through and on the right—Don’t hurry me, dear, I’m in such a state I can’t hardly think. Well, Arthur came in last night, you see, and I could tell at once there was something in the wind because he was wearing his bowler, you see, and I told him long ago I didn’t like him in his bowler, and he’s never worn it since, not till last night, so I said “ The bowler, eh ? I suppose your passion’s burnt itself out ? ”—joking, you see—Boys’ pants ? No, madam, in the Juveniles, the next department—Well, he looked sheepish at that, like when you tell a man he’s got no soul for music and he hasn’t, and after a bit he said he was sorry, but the fact was, he’d come to say Good-bye, because if the truth was told he was going to be married. So I said “ Married, eh ? Congratulations I’m sure, and what may her name be ? ” Because

I wasn't going to show anything, you see. "Well, if you want to know," he said, "her name's Sylvia Wilkins." And then he told me all about her, from her blasted eyes to her blasted address, which is Addison Road, if you please. Well, we were sitting in the front-room, you see, because it was raining, and just then Father comes along the passage, and Father's always said he'd horse-whip anybody if their intentions wasn't honourable—Father's very old-fashioned, you see—so when I saw Father I said—No, Mr. Arundale, I wasn't gossiping, I was just saying to Miss Williams, these Windsor night-gowns have all gone but six and it seems to me we're throwing them away at the price—Nasty little rat! I'd be ashamed to be a shop-walker if I was a man!—So I said to Father, "Congratulate Arthur, Father, he's going to be married." "To you, my dear?" says Father, all of a radio. "No," I said, "to Sylvia Wilkins." Well, you see, I've always let on to Father that me and Arthur were more or less engaged, because if I hadn't done that he'd have put his hoof down long ago—Girls' Outfits? the next department, madam—So when Father heard about Sylvia Wilkins, he saw scarlet you see—well, I think he'd had one or two, and he said to Arthur: "Look here, young scum-of-the-earth,

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you've betrayed my daughter, and I'm goin' to horse-whip you, see?" So I said Arthur hadn't betrayed me, and Arthur said he wasn't going to be horse-whipped—Ribbons, madam? Yes, madam, straight through to the Fancy and Specialties—That young woman's buying half the shop, my dear, getting her trousseau, I shouldn't wonder. I can't stand those sunflower shingles, can you?—Well, so Father went into the kitchen to look for the horse-whip—Pyjamas? Yes, madam. Would it be for your personal wear? Certainly. We are selling a great many of the Paris Pyjama—for camp and yacht-wear. Yes, madam, they are very much worn. The heliotrope are very fetching, madam. Or would you prefer the Cambridge blue? One-three-ten, madam, reduced from thirty-five shillings. We are practically giving them away, madam. Two pairs of the Cambridge? Very well, madam. Cash, madam, or on account? Wonderful weather, madam, quite a treat. A little fresher to-day, I think. Thank you, madam. Will you pay at the desk, please? Good morning, madam—Well, my dear, Father couldn't find the horse-whip, because Mother hid it the moment she heard him on the rampage, you see, but that only made him the madder, and he came back waving the coal-hatchet and shouting and

swearing something terrible, and he said to Arthur. "Will you come out in the yard and be horse-whipped, young man?" And Arthur said "Not with a hatchet, sir," very polite, you see. Well, Father was mad at that, you see, and reelly I think he thought the hatchet was a horse-whip, so he lifted up the horse-whip, the hatchet, I mean—Yes, Mr. Arundale? Miss Farrow, forward, bust-bodices, please—Well, Arthur never turned a hair, but I thought it was all up with him, but just then Mother came in, and she gave Father one of her suffering looks and she said, "Where did you put the aspirins, Tom, my head's splitting?" Well, that seemed to sober Father, because he always says that Mother's headaches knock the stuffing out of him, so he put down the hatchet and Mother said, "What's the argument about?"—Boys' underclothes? Straight through to the Juveniles, madam—You wouldn't think there were so many boys in the world, would you? Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, Arthur spoke up and he said he'd been gone on this Sylvia Wilkins for years, only she wouldn't have him, but she'd gone and changed her mind, you see, and he said he and me were very good friends but that was all. So I said, "That's right." Well, I'd have said anything to save a scene. So Father flared up

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and he said, "Friends my eye! Then what's all the kissing and cuddling for, tell me that!" My dear, wasn't it awful? Well, Mother said, "Don't be vulgar, Tom!" And there's no getting away from it, Father is vulgar when he's worked up. So he said, "Vulgar, am I? Well, will this young feller-me-lad answer a straight question—has there been kissing and cuddling or has there not?" So Arthur said there might have been a little kissing and cuddling, but only Platonic, you see. Well, then the fat was in the fire. "Platonic!" shouts Father, "you dare to try those games with my daughter!" And he picks up the hatchet and he makes for Arthur. Well, Mother caught hold of him and I caught hold of him, and there was a regular dog-fight, and the next thing I knew, there was Arthur lying on the ground with the blood all over his face. *My dear, the blood!* You never saw anything like it—Are you being attended to, madam? We have a very cheap line in silk bed-socks to-day. Pardon? Cheese, madam? That will be in the Provisions, through the Livestock. Thank you—"Well," says Father, "is he dead?" "Looks like it," Mother said. "Well," says Father, "the first thing is to get rid of the body, I won't have a scandal in *this* house," because Father reads a lot of these

murder stories, you see. Well, Mother and me bathed Arthur's face, while Father walked up and down thinking how to get rid of the body. And reelly I did think Arthur was done for, he lay so still. But presently he sits up, and it was only a flesh-wound, so Father apologized and we all had supper—Boys' pants? Straight through to the Juveniles, madam—Well, that's the end of *my* little romance—Night-gowns? Yes, madam. The Windsor style is very attractive. All silk, hand-lace, as worn by the Queen of Serbia. We have them in the three shades, madam, Rose du Barri, Cerise and Flesh. There has been a great run on this style, madam. These are the last half-dozen, madam. We are selling them at a very considerable reduction, madam, twenty-six shillings, madam, marked at two guineas. I will inquire, madam—Mr. Arundale?—Yes, madam, for that number we would let them go at half-price, madam. Shall I send them? Certainly, madam. The weather is wonderful, is it not, madam? Quite a treat. A little fresher to-day, I think. And the name, please? Miss Sylvia Wilkins. Miss Sylvia *Wilkins*, did you say, madam? And the address? 410, Addison Road. Thank you, madam, I will have them sent by the next delivery. Will you pay at the desk, please? *Good morning*, madam—Well, my dear, what

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d'you think of that? That's the little fairy that's ruined my life—and I've sold her six nighties for half-price ! '

(1928)

X. ROMANCE

(Rex v. Figg, Figg, and Crole)

THIS case was brought a stage nearer to its conclusion to-day when the Attorney-General began his closing speech for the Crown.

Sir Richard said : This trial has been so prolonged and the issues are so complex that it will be well if I begin by briefly recapitulating the story of the case as it has been related in evidence.

The prisoners, Jasper and Eliza Figg, are, or were, a married couple in reduced circumstances. Mr. Figg is by profession a writer of detective stories, and his wife kept an old curiosity shop. Neither was successful and twelve months ago by their own admission they were on the brink of ruin. They are now rich. And they stand in that dock before you to face the charge that they have acquired that wealth by conspiracy and fraud.

The story is a remarkable one. Twelve months ago Mrs. Figg suddenly disappeared from Battersea, where the Figgs resided, and Mr. Figg informed the police. Mr. Figg's manner and bearing were such that the police caused inquiries to be made concerning his

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mode of life ; and these inquiries disclosed a strong suspicion in the neighbourhood that Mrs. Figg had fallen a victim to the violence of her husband. They were last seen together in the dusk of evening in Battersea Park, and a nursemaid testified to their having ' words '.

This in itself was not necessarily incriminating, but further inquiries pointed to the existence of a strong attachment between the prisoner Figg and the other female prisoner, Lydia Crole, who is an adventuress and was already known to the police. This woman had for some weeks been a regular visitor at the Figgs' flat, and such was the nature of her appearance and the shape and colour of her hats that in the minds of the Figgs' friends and neighbours there was little doubt that the relations between Figg and Crole were irregular.

Some weeks later the body of a woman was found dead in the Thames at Wapping. The body was considerably decomposed and battered, but Mr. Figg, though he found himself unable to swear to its identity, inclined to the opinion that the body was that of his wife.

At the inquest, which was very well attended, though clashing by an unhappy chance with the University Match, Mr. Figg confessed to his guilty relations with the prisoner Crole, but denied that he had murdered his wife. Crole

also, though not till she had suffered the ordeal of a severe but thoroughly entertaining cross-examination, admitted that for many months she had been Figg's paramour. But she swore that she had seen Mrs. Figg alive some hours after the alleged quarrel in Battersea Park.

The coroner's jury found a verdict of ' Wilful Murder ' against Figg, and he was arrested. At the Old Bailey, however, the grand jury, to the general disappointment, threw out the bill on the ground that there was not sufficient evidence to show that Mrs. Figg had been murdered, or that, if she had, Mr. Figg had murdered her.

There was left, however, in the public mind a very strong impression that Mr. Figg had foully taken the life of his wife for the sake of another woman, and after his release he became a national hero. During the period of his incarceration his brothers and sisters, his aged Nanny, and various domestics who from time to time had been in his service earned small but steady sums from the newspapers for little anecdotes of his early life, his taste in hats, and his personal habits, while the sale of his detective stories (which are admitted by both sides to be quite unusually bad) had risen by leaps and bounds ; indeed, you have heard in evidence that the printers, though working

overtime, were wholly unable to keep pace with the demand.

And now that he was released, technically blameless but happily still suspected, Fortune opened her generous arms still wider to the widower. With what was then thought to be a singular stroke of heartlessness he placed the adventuress Crole in charge of his wife's little curiosity shop, and, though vast crowds gathered daily outside the shop to make a Christian protest, and strong bodies of police and eventually the military were required to keep order in the street, the woman was rewarded for these inconveniences by the endless stream of purchasers which flowed all day through the establishment. Van after van of old curiosities rolled up to the door, yet many times in the succeeding months her stock was in danger of exhaustion. To lighten the labours of the police she trebled and quadrupled her prices, but this, if anything, increased the throng, and you have heard that citizens were prepared to pay four and five guineas for a counterfeit stamp or an old-fashioned pin-cushion if only it was sold by the hand of Lydia Crole.

Meanwhile, Mr. Figg was rapidly acquiring a fortune. The world film-rights of all his seventeen books were sold in a day for many

thousands of pounds. The Sunday newspapers besieged his door inviting him to name his own figure for a series of reminiscences or articles on any subject or no subject at all. An enterprising publisher offered him two thousand pounds to write a book entitled *Three Days in the Dock*, and this he contracted to do, with the stipulation that the same publisher should publish his entire output for the next five years at highly exorbitant rates. Editors telegraphed from all over the country soliciting his views on marriage, on cricket, on the Epstein panel. He was invited to act for the films, to appear at music-halls. But he had now no time for any profession but his own. His account of the 'romance' between himself and the prisoner Crole was syndicated in twenty-seven newspapers. A bishop preached a sermon on his sin. In a word, he became rich.

How long this condition of things would have continued, or what were the ultimate intentions of the man, it is not possible to say. But in April of this year, by an unfortunate accident, Mrs. Figg was discovered alive and well, but using a false name and wig, in furnished lodgings at Hastings. It was then revealed that not only had Mr. Figg not murdered his wife, but Mrs. Figg had never been murdered at all ; there had never been a quarrel in Battersea

Park, there had been no romance, intrigue, or liaison with the woman Crole ; their relations were purely of a business character, and even these they sustained with difficulty, for, as both have confessed in cross-examination, they loathed each other from the first. The Figgs, on the other hand, were devoted to each other. In fact, for the best part of a year the male prisoner has been leading a double life, and, while the whole Press of England was ringing with his shame, was actually, each week-end, secretly visiting his wife at Hastings, where no doubt they chuckled affectionately together on the Sabbath morning over his racy accounts of their unhappy union. In short, gentlemen, you will have no difficulty in deciding, that morally at any rate, a most heartless fraud has been committed, a fraud upon the innocent public, and upon those enterprising purveyors who satisfy the people's healthy appetite for stories of romance.

Civil actions, we understand, are being instituted against Figg by the various newspapers, film companies and publishers who find themselves bound for many years to come by contracts which, now that the bottom has been knocked out of Mr. Figg's pretensions, hold out for them no promise of gain. With these we are not concerned. We have to determine

whether this moral act of deceit is criminal and punishable. You have heard the case for the defence—in my opinion the most outrageous defence that was ever supported by a responsible advocate in a British court of justice. The prisoner Figg says in effect that he has committed no fraud ; that everything he did was in the normal exercise of his profession, which is the invention of stories ; he contends that the one thing distinguishing the present work of fiction from his previous attempts was the favour it won from the public ; and he complains bitterly that this, his first successful literary venture, has been interrupted and indeed concluded by the activities of the police. This ingenious but impudent defence I will now proceed to examine.

The Attorney-General was still examining this ingenious but impudent defence when the Court adjourned for luncheon.

(1927)

XI. FAMILY FACES

THE only card-games which it is worth while for a man of sense to waste his time on are those which are not played with cards at all, such as the game which I invented in the smoking-room of the *S.S. Coronado*. It is played with the signed wine-cards which the steward returns to you on the last day of the voyage with the bill. The bills having been paid, two players take their respective packs and deal the cards out one by one, as in 'Beggar my Neighbour.' Whenever the word 'Whisky' turns up each player cries 'Snap !' and the one crying 'Snap !' first wins. But a rum punch is joker and takes the pool always.

I played George, and George of course won. I had perhaps more voice, but he had more whisky-cards. And an old gentleman, in bed, sent up from C Deck to ask if the community singing would be continued long, because if so he would like to join us.

'Family Faces' is just such a game. George and I often go down for the week-end to old Fothergill's. On our last visit we found Mr. Honeybubble there as well. Now, Fothergill comes of a very old family and likes to talk

about it after dinner. Normally George and I have not the smallest objection to Fothergill's ancestors. We sit snoozing comfortably over Fothergill's excellent cigars and brandy, while Fothergill climbs happily higher and higher up the family tree. He generally stops at about De Courcy Fothergill, who was a Lord Chief Justice in the reign of Queen Anne. But on this occasion his ascent was frequently and foully interrupted by Honeybubble, who would keep butting in with his own detestable forebears in Lancashire.

Fothergill is not used to this sort of thing, and the atmosphere became uncomfortable and even subsultry. So much so that George and I, roused before our time, began to have fond memories of our own ancestors, and George mentioned his great-uncle, who was first Bishop of Umbobo, until eaten, very properly, by a cannibal. I then spoke of my grandfather the Admiral, and the end of it was that George suggested that when we next met we should all bring photographs or miniatures of our respective families and see which had the best. This meant that Fothergill had to ask Honeybubble for another week-end, which I don't know that he was so terribly keen on ; but he did it, and the evening concluded in a lethal hush, like Europe just before the Great War.

Well, we all met again last week-end, and after dinner on Saturday George sent us off to fetch our families. He himself had a packet of photographs the thickness of *Who's Who*.

The game of 'Family Faces' you have probably played. But you have never played it with George. Don't. George, I think, would cheat at a Charity Spelling Bee. We sat down at the card-table, and George explained the rules of the game, which are that each player plays an ancestor or relation, and the plainest relation pays five shillings, which the handsomest receives. (Well, that is how George explained the rules.) Honeybubble protested that the whole thing was frivolous and not at all what he had expected ; but Fothergill, who has always made a great point of the fine looks of his ancestors, over-ruled him, and the game began.

Fothergill played first ; and he led his ace, the Lord Chief Justice in the reign of Queen Anne. A fine-looking old fellow, though perhaps the tiniest bit dated by his whiskers. I played modestly my Admiral. Honeybubble with a tremendous air put down Joshua Honeybubble, J.P., and we all gazed at Joshua.

'That is my great-great-uncle,' he said, 'first Mayor of Bootle, founded the Bootle Fire Brigade, fought in the Crimean War, was a

friend of Richard Cobden, Justice of the Peace——'

'But that's no good, old boy,' said George ;
'he has a face like an onion.'

Now, I could not defend this utterance of George's in a Court of Law, much less a Court of Chivalry. As a matter of fact the face of Joshua Honeybubble bore no resemblance whatever to an onion. It was quite a good face, and I thought myself that it was a toss-up between Joshua and the Lord Chief Justice for the best-looker. But the awful thing is that I do not really care *what* outrage a man does to Honeybubble. So I was silent.

'An *onion*?' said Honeybubble indignantly, as if it would have been pardonable to liken Joshua to a potato or a mangold-wurzel.

'An onion,' said George—'quite definitely, an onion.'

Honeybubble made an angry sound like the end of a soda-water syphon.

'It's your turn, George,' I said, to ease the tension, as it were.

George then played an unmistakable photograph of Miss Gladys Cooper.

'That is my mother,' he said simply.

I opened my mouth, astounded (even I, who know George). I realized instantly that both Fothergill and Honeybubble were of that rare

kind of bat who would not know Miss Gladys Cooper if they saw her, and indeed they were both goggling reverently at George's mother. I was just going to speak when George kicked me very viciously on the ankle. It then crossed my mind that, if George was disqualified for a foul, I should very likely have to pay Honeybubble five shillings, and this, I thought, was more than Joshua was worth. So, basely, I confess, I was silent again.

We then voted. George's remark about the onion must have prejudiced us against Joshua, for Joshua had to pay up and George's mother won.

'You to play, Honeybubble,' said George good-humouredly.

Honeybubble then played an ancestor so appalling that I instantly played my good uncle James.

'My aunt Elizabeth,' said Honeybubble. 'A great woman ; she gave all her life to the poor. Married three times, was presented to the Queen, Vice-President of the Primrose League—er——'

'But, man,' shrieked George, 'she's in *bloomers* !'

It was true. She was wearing bloomers and standing beside a bicycle. It was awful.

'I did not understand,' said Honeybubble

stiffly, 'that this was to be a Beauty Competition.'

'Well, it is,' said George, and coolly played a rather inferior chorus-girl as she appears in *The Crinoline Girl*.

'My grandmother,' he said, 'on her wedding day.'

The others loved her, and I bided my time.

The truth is that George had *finessed* too much, for the rest of us voted for Fothergill's father, a grand-looking fellow. Honeybubble paid, of course.

At this point, by a stupid piece of clumsiness, I knocked George's cards on to the floor. I helped him to pick them up, naturally, and was fortunate enough to secure the top dozen photographs in his pack. I put my ankles well over towards Fothergill and the game proceeded.

Proceeded? It became a procession. In the next round I played George's *fiancée* (for the time being), a lovely girl.

'My step-mother,' I said, 'as a bridesmaid.'

George spluttered but said nothing. I won; Honeybubble lost with an ancestral alderman.

I then played in quick succession Miss Tallulah Bankhead, June, Mr. Owen Nares, Miss Jean Forbes-Robertson, Lopokova, Mr.

Nicholas Hannen, Miss Angela Baddeley, Captain Eden, M.P., and the Duchess of York. George had brought a wonderful family, but his second eleven were no match for his first. I played one of my own relations now and then to let Fothergill win a trick with his lawyers and big-game hunters and make him happy. Honeybubble continued to play aldermen and bishops and noted philanthropists and aunts and uncles of unimpeachable virtue but unspeakable appearance. He always paid ; it was monstrous. After a few tricks even George began to put in a good word for Honeybubble's ancestors, but nothing could save them. I think in the end even Honeybubble voted against them.

And then—I suppose I was tired by the constant strain of invention—I turned up Miss Edna Best, and I simply could not think what relation she was. I had played seven aunts, I knew, and almost as many sisters, but I could *not* remember what other relatives I had exhibited.

‘That is my mother,’ I said feebly at last. ‘Taken at the Boat-race.’

‘I beg your pardon?’ said Fothergill suspiciously, and George kicked me again.

‘You’ve had one mother already, sir,’ said Honeybubble rather rudely.

‘ Well, then,’ I said, all harassed, ‘ that is my little daughter.’

And then of course there were questions, and then there were explanations, and then there were harsh words, and, what with one thing and another, that week-end was quite difficult. But I do *not* think that Honeybubble will say quite so much about his ancestors in future.

(1928)

XII. THE POODLE AND THE PUG

*WHEN I was a High School noodle
And life was rather smug,
My father kept a poodle,
My mother kept a pug ;
And every Sunday, after three,
This strange procession you might see,
My dear Papa, Mamma and me,
The poodle and the pug.*

The poodle I could never bear,
For he was naked here and there,
And, partly bare and partly hair,
Was like a worn-out rug.
The pug, upon the other hand,
Was far too well upholstered, and
Somehow the pug I could not stand—
I could not stand the pug.
Oh, dear, how I disliked those dogs !
The pug had features like a frog's,
And deep in the profoundest bogs
Could I have put that pug.
*For every Sunday, after three,
This strange procession you might see,
My dear Papa, Mamma and me,
The poodle and the pug.*

The poodle was alert and gay,
He liked to run in front and play
In quite a Continental way,
Unlike the pompous pug ;
The pug was more the Saxon kind,
He plodded on a mile behind
And in his movements called to mind
An alderman, or slug.
And that explains the life I led,
For it was I who, rather red,
Pursued the poodle, far ahead,
Or waited for the pug.
*And every Sunday, after three,
This strange procession you might see,
My dear Papa, Mamma and me,
The poodle and the pug.*

Those dogs have left their mark on me ;
So many citizens I see
A sort of poodle seem to be,
Or else a sort of pug.
At ballets of the Russian kind
Whole packs of poodles you will find,
With tufts of hair stuck here and there
Which one would like to tug ;
While as for pugs, if you reflect,
You know a dozen, I expect ;
Well, Mrs. Bun at Number One
Is definitely pug.

THE POODLE AND THE PUG

*And you, when you go beddy-bye,
Look in your mirror, eye to eye,
And put the question, ' Which am I—
A poodle or a pug ? '*

I cannot tell upon what grounds
I sing of these unpleasant hounds ;
The Muse proceeds by leaps and bounds,
One follows with a shrug.

But this is what occurs to me—
Degraded though the age may be,
At any rate we seldom see

A poodle or a pug.

Our ways would make our fathers weep,
Our skirts too short, our drinks too deep ;
But, dash it all, we do *not* keep

A poodle or a pug !

*And you, my child, will never be
Compelled on Sundays, after three,
To walk with your Mamma and me,
A poodle and a pug.*

(1930)

XIII. THE FARMER

THE Farmer will never be happy again ;
He carries his heart in his boots ;
For either the rain is destroying his grain
Or the drought is destroying his roots.

You may speak, if you can, to this querulous
man,

Though I should not attempt to be funny,
And if you insist, he will give you a list
Of the reasons he's making no money.

He will tell you the Spring was a scandalous
thing,

For the frost and the cold were that bad ;
While what with the heat and the state of the
wheat

The Summer was nearly as sad.

The Autumn, of course, is a permanent source
Of sorrows as black as your hat ;
And as for the Winter, I don't know a printer
Who'd print his opinion of *that*.

And, since (to our shame) the seasons I name
Keep happening year after year,
You can calculate out to a minute about
How much he enjoys his career.

THE FARMER

No wonder he eyes the most roseate skies
With a mute inexpressible loathing ;
No wonder he swears ; and no wonder he wears
Such extremely peculiar clothing.

Poor fellow ! his pig declines to grow big
(You know what these animals are !),
His favourite heifer is very much deafer,
The bull has a chronic catarrh.

In fact, when you meet this unfortunate man,
The conclusion is only too plain
That Nature is just an elaborate plan
To annoy him again and again.

Which makes it so difficult not to be rude,
As you'll find when you're lunching together ;
He is certain to brood if you speak of the food,
And it's fatal to mention the weather.

You must never, I beg, refer to an egg,
However deplorably done,
And it's cruel to say ' It's a very fine day ! '
When he's probably sick of the sun.

But under what head to address him instead
I cannot pretend to be sure,
Though no doubt there are many good things
to be said
Concerning the price of manure.

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While if you are short of appropriate themes
There is always the State of the Nation,
And Drama, and Art, and the Meaning of
Dreams,
And Proportional Representation.

But you cannot go wrong if you stick to this
song,
And assume that his heart's in his boots,
For either the rain is destroying his grain
Or the drought is destroying his roots.

(1922)

XIV. REDUCING

TRIX darling, have you *ever* been to a Turkish Bath well *don't*, of course if you're *reducing*, but not unless you're *simply* mountainous, and even then, but don't go for voluptuous pleasure that's all because my dear it's rather an *erroneous* entertainment, well recently darling I've had the *fraction* of a worry about my little figure, my dear *nothing* spectacular I'm still the *world's* sylph really, but there's just the *teeniest* ripple when I *bend*, and nowadays if a girl can't jump through her garter she's *gross*, well of course I did all those *unnatural* exercises and breathing through the hips and everything, but really my dear what with the hair and the face-cream and the care of the hands it's as much as a girl can do to get to bed as it *is* and if she's going to spend half the night expanding the *lungs* as well, well when *is* a girl to put in a spot of beauty-sleep, so the exercises *dwindled* somewhat.

Well then there's this *affected* fruit business, my dear Hermione eats *nothing* but radishes and she's *quite* invisible but looks like a ghost and my dear I do think breakfast is one of the *few* things worth clinging to in this life, don't you,

however I kept on *noticing* this ripple in the bath and that gave me the idea of this Turkish performance because somebody once told me that's the quickest thing ever and they say one of the Duchesses looked almost human after two.

Well I *crawled* in, all by myself, wasn't it heroic, but my dear *quite* petrified and feeling *just* like a human sacrifice approaching the altar, well my dear they take all your clothes away and give you the *most* mortifying garment in *thick* white linen my dear like an abbreviated *shroud* or the *Fat Boy's* nightgown, and wide enough for the *widest* Duchesses, so my dear you can *imagine* what your Topsy looked like, well the first place you go into is called the *teppidairium* or something, not very hot but quite hot enough, a sort of purgatory my dear, where you prepare for the bath to come, so to speak, well I *crept* in my dear feeling like a dog that's done the wrong thing, and of course the *sole* soul in the place was the *most* redundant woman I know, the widow Wockley, my dear you know I can't *bear* to say an unkind thing but really my dear she is quite definitely *unmagnetic*, and my dear she looked like Mrs. Caliban in the shroud and her hair like sea-weed and she had the *most* unseductive skin, well she was reading *Beauty While You Wait* and from what I can

REDUCING

make out she takes a T. B. once a week, well she was all over me at once, you'd have thought we were *sisters* though really I've scarcely *met* the woman and *never* in shrouds, but my dear the *confidences*, well I gather she wants to get married again or something, though of course my dear she'll *simply* never be forty again, anyhow she plunged into the *most* embarrassing wail about 'Men' and all her *fatiguing* affairs and things, my dear she might have been HELEN OF TROY dictating her diary, Trix darling you *know* I'm not prudish *don't* you but I do think there ought to be some sort of *reticence* in the teppidairium don't you, and all in the *most* baneful we-girls-know-a-thing-or-two-don't-we style, my dear positively *leersome*, and as if she wasn't a *second* older than me, well after a bit something told me I should be *quite* ill *very* soon so I got up in the middle of a sentence and merely *fled* into one of the hot rooms.

Well, you go through a heavy curtain and the *most* awful *blast* of heat *strikes* you in the face, my dear *too* detonating, I just crumpled up and sat down and my dear the seat was *red-hot*, if you could have *seen* me leap up to the roof, well really I thought I should *burst* into *flames*, but rather than go back to the Wockley woman I thought I'd cheerfully be *insinerated*, so I

tottered about like a cat on hot bricks, and my dear have you ever been to the *Aquarium* because if you have you know if you look closely into one of those tanks you generally see something perfectly *repugnant* lurking in a corner or sticking to a rock and you can't think *what* it is, it's just a *Thing*, and personally I move on to the next exhibit, well suddenly I realized that this room was full of *Bodies*, and my dear the most *undecorative* bodies, all *pink* and *shiny* with their eyes closed, and not a sound my dear, well if you can imagine a lot of *enormous* dead lobsters with white nighties on and very fat arms and my dear *one* of them was Lettice Loot, you know I do think there's a *lot* of nonsense talked about the beauty of the human form and everything, because really I do think that women are *about* the most hideous things there are don't you darling and that's why we have to be so careful about *clothes*, of course I think these artists are a lot to blame because my dear *look* at the lying pictures of women they do and really if any one did a picture of a single corner in a Ladies' Turkish Bath well really I think that would be the finish of *matrimony*.

However, well then I took a peep into the *second* hot-room where there were only two dead lobsters, but my dear *too* squalid and the heat was *blistering* so I went back into the first room

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and my dear *imagine* my horror there was the Wockley body laid out with the others, I recognised it at once, well she opened one eye at me and I was *terrified* she'd *plunge* into her romances again so I escaped back into the teppidairium and read the Directions, well it said you pour teppid water over the *head* and await the *free* outburst of perspiration, and my dear you should have *seen* your poor Topsy sitting all by herself in a fat child's nightie *dripping* teppid water and waiting and waiting for the free outburst and everything, but my dear simply *nothing* took place, and I was petrified because I thought perhaps I was abnormal or cold-blooded or something degrading, well at last the Wockley came out looking *yards* thinner already, my dear she'd practically *disappeared*, but not quite, unfortunately, well she said Have you sweated dear, and that will show you what I mean about a Turkish Bath, because my dear Trix *any* place where a woman like the Wockley can come up to a girl and ask her in cold blood if she's sweated well there *must* be a defect in the *whole* institution. Well I said No I hadn't sweated but I was doing what a girl could, and she said You're in the wrong room, if you don't sweat you'll have *pneumonia*, so I said I'd rather have *peritonitis* than go back into that *insanitary* oven

with the bodies in it, and she said Come and try the Russian Steam Bath then, well my dear by this time I'd have tried the Russian Steam Roller to get out of the place, so she took me into the *most* antagonising cell and let off *masses* of Russian steam, my dear *too* alarming, but there was a capital free outburst and everything and I *rushed* out just before I was asphyxiated, well after that she began on her *odorous* adventures again and my dear you know I don't blush *gratuitously* but I got hotter and hotter and very soon I said Thank-you Mrs. Wockley, your conversation's done the trick, and I walked off, my dear *too* crude, I know, but *really* !

Well before I could get to my clothes I was caught by an *Amazon* of a woman and laid *flat* on a marble slab, my dear like a *salmon* or a side of ham, and my dear she scrubbed me and scraped me and prodded me and slapped me, my dear *too* humbling, and then she knocked the liver about and stood me up and turned the *hugest* hose on me, my dear I might have been a *conflagration*, well of course you know I'm not *built* for rough stuff and your *ill-treated* Topsy fell *flat* on her face, well then as if that wasn't enough she led me to the *most* barbarous *cold plunge* and said jump in Madam, well my dear only one thing *created* could have made me

REDUCING

jump into *cold water* after all I'd been through and at that moment I heard behind me the *leptous* voice of the Wockley woman and rather than share the same *element* with the creature I *dove* into the frozen depths and stayed under water till she'd gone away, well after all this I lost four pounds but my dear I've had *such* an appetite *ever* since that I've put on six, so it's *rather* fallacious in the reducing line and perhaps it will have to be the *radishes* after all, O *dear*, farewell, your *unfortunate* Topsy.

(1928)

XV. CASE FOR THE DEFENCE

AS
NO Trix *no* he *never* kissed me or *anything*, well not *really*, my dear I'm *too* deflated about your *wounded* letter because *honestly* my dear there was *merely* nothing between Harry and me and of *course* I'll tell you *all* about it only of course it's *too* esoteric to express in *words*, and of course my dear I *can't* make out whether you're *engaged* to the man or not, because if *not* it all seems *rather* superfluous don't you think darling, and *if* you *are*, well I *never* believe in all this *attitudinous pre-marriage* confession-business, my dear in these days *nobody* wants to marry anybody who's spent the spring-time of their youth in a glass case do they darling, because as Mr. Haddock says my dear you *don't* go to a plumber and say *look here* I want you to do the *most* complicated plumbing job only you must *promise* you've *never* done any plumbing *before*, you say the *more* experience the man has had the *better*, and my dear there's *no* doubt that a love affair is the *most* difficult of all human affairs so that it's *rather* infantile to go on as if a man who's *never* had one must be the *most* convincing lover *isn't* it, and as a *matter* of fact as Mr. Haddock said *nearly* all

soul-mates find each other in the end by *trial* and *error* and the more *trial* the less *error*, you do see what I mean darling, well you *might* say that *I* was one of Harry Barter's *errors* perhaps, *without* which he'd *never* have realised that *you* were the *only*, darling, only *don't* jump to *aromatic* conclusions darling just because it *is* so prohibitive to suggest in *black* ink my dear the absolute *snowiness* of a girl's conscience and everything.

Because my dear in *this* case there's no question of confession or *anything*, and anyhow it was *centuries* ago, well you remember when there was all that *old-fashioned* chat about psychoparalysis and the *Unconscious*, and it was the done thing to have the *most* insanitary *Unconscious*, but of course *too* normal on the surface, well my dear I went through the *most* psychalytic phase, and *my* *Unconscious* was an *utter drain*, I've always said I caught Hermione Tarver's because we were *rather* bosoms at that time, and my dear a really septic *Unconscious* used to run through whole families like a Christmas cold, well she lent me love-stories by a man called LAWRENCE, my dear *loins* and *glands* and *ganglions* and everything, *too* anatomical, and I had the *most* Cadogan *soul-storms*, my dear *too* chic, well my dear I'd *suddenly* find that I couldn't *bear* the *butler*, or I'd

suddenly faint at the sight of *porridge*, and then I used to lock myself in my room and read VOLUMES about the *lumbar ganglion* which from what I can make out is some part of the *liver*, and I was always having *debased* yearnings, well my dear I *ached* for *onions*, and I wanted to *ride* on a pillion or go up in a *swing*, and of course the *most* discreditable *dreams*, my dear I *can't* tell you, my dear *umbrellas* and *bowler-hats* and everything *significant*, and my dear I still think it's *rather* stimulating when you think that *Romeo* and *Juliet* and all those *uncontrolled* people in history were *merely* suffering from *gland-trouble* or the *lumbar* thingummy don't you agree darling.

Well of course it *couldn't* go on because my dear I was a *mere* vortex, my dear too *glandular*, and everybody said it was only my Unconscious and I'd much better go to somebody and have it taken out, which was what everybody was doing, my dear you *must* remember the *Black Duchess* had *three* Unconsciouses each more festering than the one before, however the *reason* I'm telling you all this is that *about* that time *your* Harry was *rather* a comrade of *Hermione T.*, my dear *utterly* boy-and-girl-and-no-nonsense of *course*, but *he* caught it *too*, and well it *so* happened that he went to the same psych-merchant as me, my dear the *most*

monastic-looking little man with a mind like a *canal*, called *Slivers*, well he asked the *dingiest* questions, and my dear he'd *suddenly* look right into my *soul* and say 'PRAM !' and my dear if I said 'BABY !' that meant that my Unconscious was *utterly* Continental and *suggestive* darling, and my dear I always did because it made him *simply* purr and you know I *always* believe in *always* doing the *Christian* thing and giving pleasure *wherever* feasible, well my dear after about *eight* visits he discovered that I had the *most* revolting *suppressed exhibitions*, which means my dear that *when* I wanted to *fling* the chocolate shape in the *butler's* face I *sat* still and did *merely* nothing, my dear *too* right, because my dear that's the *detonating* thing it was *utterly true*, oh and of course I forgot, I had to tell him all my dreams, because my dear the *whitest* dream means something *too* foul, but my dear either it was always the *same* dream or I *couldn't* remember it or I was *utterly dreamless*, so I used to leap out of bed in the *middle* of the night and write reams in my dream-book before I forgot and then the cold snap came so I had to *make* them up, because my dear nobody got their money's worth unless they had the *smelliest* dreams, well my dear my *favourite* dream was about *three* black women in *green* satin who used to *ride* about on bicycles singing

Land of Hope and Glory, and my dear the *whole* time I was *trying* to think of the *next line* and *never* could, my dear *agony*, well it seems *that* sort of dream is *too* revealing and my little wizard took the *gravest* view, because my dear it *so* happened that *Harry's* pet dream was utterly the same breed the man said, well *he* used to dream about *being* at a railway-station when the *roof* fell in and he had another about an *old* peeress who kept on bursting into *flames* at meal-times, my dear *too* alarming, and it seems *that* means that Harry's Unconsh was in the same state as mine only *complimentary* you see, sort of twin souls *reaching* out, my dear like two bats in cages, and my man said that if we got together and were *utterly* frank probably *all* our exhibitions would *cancel* out and be *quite* liquidated, so we did but my dear you *do* understand that the whole thing was perfectly *medical* and on the soul-plane don't you darling?

Because my dear we used to meet *once* a week and exchange exhibitions and everything, and my dear whenever we had an *unsavoury* yearning we merely *yielded* to it, my dear we used to *slink* away to *Soho* and Palais de *Danses* and everything plebeian, and my dear we started a perfect *cult* for celery and dough-nuts because we found they had the *most* aspirin properties if

you eat them slowly out of a *paper-bag*, and then of course I was *quite* rude to the butler and he left, and after that I became *too* normal again, but meanwhile my dear *don't* think we'd been a blest pair of sirens or anything because as a *matter* of fact the *whole* episode was *rather* wearing because my dear we had the *most* antagonious rows *always* because it was only our Unconsciouses that were a *fraction* harmonious you see, because *in the flesh* we were generally *hating* each other, but of course the *two* planes are *so* mixed up my dear that one can't always keep them apart, and my dear I don't know *what* he's told you *exactly* but of course it's *quite* possible that he *thinks* he remembers some things happening on the *earthly* plane which were really going on in the *Unconscious*, if you see what I mean, well it's *perfectly* true we went down to Brighton one day because my dear that was one of our suppressed *exhibitions*, my dear we *both* had a *low* craving to look at those penny-in-the-slots on the pier about what Tommy saw at Paris, and my dear *one* pennyworth cured the *two* of us, my dear *too* healing, but of course *as* I said my dear this kissing idea is *utterly mythical* because anything of that kind must have been definitely in the Unconscious department which of course nobody's to blame for, and by the way darling it's only fair to mention that his was *quite* cured

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too, in fact I should have said that he was *totally* normal now, so I do wish you *every* happiness and you do understand *don't* you darling, *celestial* luck from your rather *hurt* little Topsy.

(1928)

XVI. TOPSY IS UNLUCKY

WELL Trix my aromatic angel the photographs are *divine* but why oh *why* have you removed the *fringe* because my dear in your style definitely brows are *not* the worn thing now, however they're *rather* winsome, I *adore* the upside-down ones, but my dear you *must* be done by this new man *Moult* who does everyone in *Shakesperian* characters, my dear I've been done as Ophelia and Nancy Astor is *Nature's* Portia and they all want Joynson-Hicks to be Malvolio or somebody only I never heard of the man, did you?

However darling one smiles through one's miseries but as a *matter* of fact I've been having *rather* a rancid time, by the way *do* you remember when we were tots at Beaumanoir that *morose* episode of the *head-gardener* whom we all abhorred, and one night we played *witches* and pretended that one of my dolls was *him* and stuck absolute *pins* into it and wished horrible wishes and finally *burnt* it in the nursery fire, and of course *two* days later the *unChristian* fellow got treble pneumonia and *perished* miserably, my dear I shall *never* forget it, I didn't smile for *days*, and of course *ever* since

I've utterly *shunned* magic, however about a fortnight ago darling, I forget if I told you, I went with Haddock to a 'surprise' party at Mew-mew's, and my dear *to* my horror I found it was one of those synthetic *thirteen* parties *you* know my dear where you do everything *unlucky* you can think of, well of course my *first* instinct was to fly, because my dear I'm *too* superstitious, well I can *just* walk under a ladder if urgent, but I do *not* go about looking for ladders if you see what I mean, and Haddock rather agrees, however of course Mew-mew said the whole thirteen idea would be shattered if there were only eleven, and my dear *then* it turned out that that Mrs. Green was one of the party, *after* which Haddock was *much* less reluctant, so what with everything I said I'd go through with the agony because I always believe in *grasping* the nettles of this nettlesome life, don't you darling?

Well my dear the whole thing was *too* provocative, they gave each of us '13' brooches and *necklaces* of opals and little cocked hats in the *most* unlucky green, we walked into dinner under a *green* ladder with Florio's band playing *all* the inauspicious tunes there are and my dear a *mechanical* magpie fluttering on the left, well when we sat down we found *all* the knives crossed and the *hugest* salt-cellar in front of

everybody to upset, and my dear the curtains weren't drawn so the *whole* time you could see the new moon through *glass* which of course is *too* unpropitious, well my dear the first thing was that we *all* had to utterly *upset* the salt-cellars and *not* throw any over the shoulder but *help* your neighbour to salt instead which you know is a *deadly* thing to do, my dear I was *emerald* with apprehension and of course the *really* unlucky thing for me was the *intense* proximity of Mrs. Green, who my dear was *next* to Haddock, while I had *Mr.* Green and a perfectly *deciduous* youth who the whole time *ecstasised* about the Russian ballet, my dear he could *think* of nothing but a single ankle-waggle which Calomelovksa or somebody used to do in *Apéritifs*, which left me *too* lukewarm especially as every two minutes one had to do some *injurious* act, my dear the butler brought us each a cameo looking-glass which we had to utterly *smash* with a hammer and throw into a basket, well my dear that was *merely* more than I could face, because my dear *seven* years is *rather* much, isn't it, so I *missed* my mirror and slipped it into the basket *unshattered*, only of course Mew-mew was *too* nosy about shirking and everything so she *inspected* the fragments and found mine and it all came out and I had to, my dear *too* humbling, and of course what was such *vinegar*

was that *there* I was my dear chattering with terror and moony with boredom about the Russian Ballet but all the time *Haddock* was quite *swimming* in the liquid eyes of the Green siren, and my dear having *such* fun that he didn't care *what* he did, my dear mutilating looking-glasses right and left and *dissipating* the salt and utterly bubbling with ill-omened quotations from Macbeth or something and of course the *solitary* balm was that instead of drinking to people's *good* health and everything it was the done thing to utterly *curse* them, though of course *quite* jocular, so my dear you should have heard me *showering* ill wishes at the Green attractor and *meaning* every word.

Well my dear and so the *ghoulish* meal dragged on, my dear we sang *Three Blind Mice* and lit *three* cigarettes with one match, and said optimistic things without *ever* touching wood, and they brought in a *live* peacock, my dear I don't know how the others felt really, but as for me all the *feasible* misfortunes merely thronged in the little brain, and of course you know that *if* you're thirteen it's the first person who gets up perishes or something, well my dear I was *quite* determined that whatever happened it wouldn't be *me*, because my dear there *are* limits, and I think perhaps Mew-mew had the same idea, anyhow *when* she caught the eye of

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the females we both *began* to get up and then subsided swiftly and looked for lipsticks under the table, with the *result* my dear that the *Green* thing was *quite* the first riser, my dear *too* malignant, but I thought no more of it and after a few tiresome unlucky games I tore Haddock away and *speeded* home, *expecting* my dear to find the *house* in flames and the bailiffs *massing* round the ruins, however all was reasonably tranquil, except that all the *dankest* people in London had rung up meanwhile and asked us to dinner, and as a matter-of-fact for a brief space afterwards the gods seemed to really be rather on the Haddock side in one or two ways, and my dear Mew-mew says she's backed *nothing* but winners since and *all* her shares have gone to twenty-seven *eighths* or something.

But my dear *what* was my horror, well when I tell you that a few days later Haddock came in with a *church-yard* countenance and said that Mrs. Green had gone into a Home and was *at* that moment *discarding* her appendix, my dear *imagine* the condition of the guilty bosom, because of course I saw absolute *visions* of your innocent little Top decorating the dock and suspended from *giblets*, because I was *quite* satisfied she'd have peritonitis or blacken my life by dying under the dope, and of course the *savage* thing was that we couldn't *approach* the

creature for two days, my dear I went about *wilting* from policemen and took to reading poetry in bed, which Mew-mew says is always a bad sign, and of course I *couldn't* tell Haddock about my *acute* conscience-trouble while of course *he* thought it was *too* Christian of me to be so concerned about the witch, my *dear* how I suffered, well the *second* she was visible I bought *all* the grapes in the Metropolis and van-loads of flowers and rushed to the bedside, and my dear *there* she was looking frail and enchanting in a *cloud* of hair, but of course heartlessly *well*, my dear no *tubes* or complications or anything and not a sign of slipping starward, however I didn't trust her an inch, because I know the type, my dear I was *too* sure she'd have relapses and quietly *drift* away, so of course *ever* since I've been like a guardian bee about the sacred bed, my dear busy with *books* and *scent* and *sweetmeats*, my dear I rang up twice nightly and I sat with her for *weeks*, *too* jading, because my dear you know what an *advantage* an operation gives a girl particularly if you can look like a tropical *lily* on the pillow, my dear that sort of *succulent* allure like *printed* velvet, *too* lush, and of course those *lavender* eyes, my dear I do *not* blame Haddock a *fraction*, only of course *he* didn't see much of the magnet poor dupe because there were always

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platoons of men in the queue, however she and I became *too* fraternal and kissed like *bosoms*, only of course *when* she talked about *how* to manage Haddock and everything it was *rather* torment because I had to sit there and merely *beam* at the little afflicted angel while of course utterly *aching* to tear her from the bed and *beat* her, however my dear all's well etc. because she's going home to-day I think, but my dear that's the *last* time *I* play the wanton with superstition and everything or wish the *flimsiest* harm to my foulest enemy. *Later*, O *gosh*, darling I've just rung up and what *do* you think, the witch has gone and got *complications* and the temperature's bounding, my dear that's *just* like her, I *know* she'll die on me, my dear I must fly and get a *hundredweight* of grapes, *what* a life farewell now and pity your palping little homicide, TOPSY.

(1929)

XVII. TROUBLE IN THE HOME

O TRIX my fortunate spinster I've had an *epileptic* day and I *must* unload the lacerated soul, of course the *truth* is that the *throes* of being a public woman are quite enough for one mortal my dear *without* having to cope with a *private* life to boot, and my dear I'm *beginning* to think there *may* be something in all that *avunculous* chat about *woman's* place being in the home and not in the House, and *what's* to happen when the twins arrive if any, I shall have to utterly *park* them somewhere or retire to the Chiltern Hundreds or something.

Well my dear it *began* at 9.0 this morning when I had to *sack* the cook, my dear *agony*, or rather it began about 1.0 this morning when Haddock started to *read* in bed, because my dear you know I'm utterly for self-determination and everything but I *have* begun recently to rather *mould* my Haddock, only my dear he's *rather* unplastic I find and he has the *most* unorthodox habits, of course I know that writers are never *too* normal but I do think the mate of a public woman ought to shave when he gets up instead of just before *lunch*, don't you darling, only of course I do *rather* sympathize because I'm *never*

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conscious till an hour after breakfast, myself and my dear the *torment* of ordering meals in an *utter* stupor, however then there are his clothes, of course since we were blighted I've *insisted* on his having *two* suits but my dear in *three* days he can make the *newest* suit look like a bagful of *bulbs*, because my dear he puts *all* he possesses in the pockets and *all* the letters he's ever received, my dear his note-case is one *protuberant* mass of *everything* except notes, so about *once* a week I have a *bird's-nesting* day and ruthlessly evacuate the *loose* tobacco and pipe-cleaners and *patent* medicines and *pieces* of string, my dear *too* miscellaneous, and then my dear he's *indecently* untidy about the house, my dear he leaves everything *quite* everywhere, my dear there are always *pipes* in the bath-room and pyjama-fragments in the dining-room, and little *deposits* of tobacco all *over* the house, I have to sort of follow him about like one of those *mechanical* reapers *picking* up the sheaves, and of course the staff gets more and more subversive, and my dear the cook has been *too* democratic about *late* meals and because Haddock will burgle the larder and *mutilate* the cold bird at midnight, so my dear *yesterday* I utterly determined to hand the harpy her passport and give Haddock rather a *lecture*, because my dear for the first few months the

best brides *procrastinate* somewhat, but there comes a moment when one has to merely assert the little self as you'll find darling.

However easier said than done, because my dear I was *all* prepared with a rather *moving* little homily when Haddock bounded into bed and said *Did* I mind if he finished his *book* which was that *Octopus* book I told you about, well my dear I was *rather* wounded because my dear he's never read in bed *before*, of course we *both* read at meals if we're alone which is rather a *sagacious* habit don't you think my dear we sit and masticate *too* mutely over blood-yarns and the like, and I'm *quite* sure that if *all* connubial couples, however when it comes to reading in *bed*, because my dear after the bath and the breathing exercises that's *just* the time the little brain is *utterly* prolific, my dear I *burgeon* with ideas and luminous hypotheses, my dear *what* a word, because sometimes I've made notes of the absolute *theories* I've had on the snowy pillow and in the morning they're *too* inspired still, so you see one rather *counts* on Haddock to be *rather* receptive just then, well my dear as usual my *worminous* good-nature betrayed me and I said *Too* welcome, and of course meanwhile such was the shock and chagrin I'd *quite* forgotten about the *lecture* darling, however never go back on your word

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when dealing with a child or husband, so I lay quiet and suffered, my dear *rather* pathetic because I had a *sudden* attack of *morbid* wisteria if you know what I mean, well I *quite* felt that this perhaps was the absolute *beginning* of the end, my dear I must have been dormatose because I sort of looked down the vistas of the years and saw Haddock reading the *whole* of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* for *quite* ever and *me* my dear lying *neglected* under the first five volumes, however I *bore* the vision for a long time bravely, my dear with scarcely a *sigh* or a weary turn-over, which is what I sometimes do when in the martyr-mood darling, because anyhow Haddock was too impervious, my dear perfectly *embedded* in architecture, and at last my dear I suddenly found myself *whimpering* mouldily into the dewy pillow, well then of course he was *too* concerned and utterly *flung* the Octopus away, only as luck would have it I rather *blurted* out a few puss-remarks about that Mrs. Green, who my dear was at the Antons' the other day and of course a *whole* week-end gave me *rather* spleen-trouble because my dear she is magical, only thanks be Haddock doesn't like her new hair-policy, my dear *drawn* back and the ears naked, the woman's *moony*, with *that* face, however the *igmonious* thing was that I'd *quite* intended to be *too*

Christian only I wasn't, so we had rather a *tropical* little talk, my dear utterly harmonious in the end of *course* only what with the vipers of remorse and remembering *all* the things I *ought* to have said I *merely* didn't close the eyes till those garrulous birds began their *redundant* anthem to the dawn and everything, while of course *Haddock* slept the entire night like a *new* kitten only noisily, my dear *too* insouciant, that's men all over darling.

Well my dear blithe virgin that you are, *imagine* after a night of suffering having to *totter* kitchenward and sack your *first* cook, my dear feeling *exactly* similar to an *under-done* egg, my dear *no* solidity and *liquid* at the top, of course there's *no* doubt that I'm *far* too Christian for this world darling, because my dear she's *be-haved* like a beetle, her *cooking's* primæval, she *banquets* the tradesmen, she has *pains* in the back and sides and will *not* do the doorstep properly, my dear *forgive* these utterly *plebeian* details but that's the holy estate of *matrimony*, anyhow I was *quite* macadamous and I drifted in like a *relentless* jelly-fish with the cruel words *tip-toe* on the little tongue, only of course she *would* choose *this* morning to be *too* boracic, my dear *no* pains in the back and *yearning* to do my *favourite* casserole and looking forward to *Easter*, and my dear *mock* and corrode as you

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will but I was *totally* disarmed, and of course she was our absolutely *first* cook and welcomed the bride home and everything, anyhow I was feeling *such* putty that I postponed the *whole* thing till lunch-time, well then my dear *Taffeta* Mole must ring up and say she's not the right temperature and can't function to-day, so my dear Haddock having gone out rather *tersely* to a publisher I had to face the *whole* correspondence of Burbleton under my own steam, and my dear I was *just* mastering the *most* suggestive letter from the Vigilance Committee about *three* girl stowaways who went to South America or Bristol or somewhere when *up* comes Hetty to say the *scullery-drain's* stopped up and Annie's come over *queer*, my dear how I *abhor* women.

Well I telephoned *tenaciously* and was put on to everyone in London except a plumber, and of course meanwhile that *demented* fellow came from Fluke's about the dining-room chairs, my dear he's *nailed* on my *unpriceable* tapestry *upside-down*, however I hunted the girl to bed with aspirins and menaces and *rang* up specialists and of course *when* a man arrived to *tune* the piano I merely *babbled* at him, my dear I felt like a *congested* pin-cushion and one more stab made utterly no difference, well it turned out that Annie had *scarlet-fever* and of course *at*

that moment it's announced that *all* the water's to be turned off and they've got to *excavate* the street, so my dear we had *cold* mutton for lunch which is Haddock's *pet* horror, the cook came up and was *too* ungenial because she said there was damp in the house, and my dear *having* lost Annie so far from *sacking* the adder I had to utterly *raise* her wages, and of course the *whole* time that bestial fellow was *torturing* the piano, well then Haddock comes back and says brightly that he's *just* ran into Mrs. Green on the Tube, however darling *don't* think I'm *weakening* or anything, only I think perhaps sometimes when a virgin rather aches for the altar she doesn't quite visualise the *wintry* future, and I think there may be something *quite* consoling about being an old maid, however to-morrow doubtless I shall be your own sunny bubble again, so farewell now your rather *tragical* TOPSY.

(1929)

XVIII. THE FORTUNE TELLERS

(*Rex v. 'The Colonel', 'Seer', 'Pathfinder', 'Old Joe', 'Ajax', Gilbey, Wallace, and the Racing Correspondent of 'The Times' Newspaper. Before Mr. Justice Wool*)

AT the Old Bailey to-day the Attorney-General, Sir Antony Dewlap, opened the case for the prosecution in the Fortune-Telling case. He said : Milord, the prisoners in the dock are charged under section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, with pretending or professing to tell fortunes. Under that Act, milord, any persons using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry, or otherwise, to deceive the people are rogues and vagabonds and punishable with imprisonment and hard labour. In a previous case to-day a woman named Sibylla was tried and convicted for pretending to tell fortunes by means of palmistry ; yesterday a gipsy woman was sent to prison for professing to tell fortunes by means of playing-cards. The prisoners in the dock are charged under the same section of the same statute ; and, though in appearance they are more respectable than the individuals I have referred to, they are equally obliged to obey the law, and the essence of the offence with which they are charged is the same.

Milord, the essence of that offence is the deception of the people by a person pretending to have the power to predict the future. The laws of England have for many centuries regarded with jealous suspicion any claim of that kind. Our judges and legislators, knowing by long experience how difficult it is for mortal man to give a correct and accurate account of what took place only a few weeks ago, will not believe that mortal man can give correct accounts of that which has not yet taken place at all.¹ By a statute of Queen Elizabeth's reign, repealed in 1863, false prophecies were punishable as misdemeanours, as raising enthusiastic jealousies among the people and terrifying them with imaginary fears. If the prophet Isaiah were to appear in London to-day he would be at once arrested. Foresight, milord, is a quality which wins applause for the citizen, provided that he looks forward to his own future only and does not pretend to see into other people's. The distinction is perhaps a fine one——

The Judge: Not at all, Mr. Attorney. It is very simple. I may look into my own bedroom, but I must not look into a lady's. (*Laughter.*)

¹ See *Simon's Case* (1731) in which the prisoner travelled about the country crying 'Your food will cost you more'. He was whipped at Pennyfields and stood in the pillory at Chancery Lane three days.

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The Attorney-General : Ha ! Very good, milord.
A matter of property.

The Judge : No, no, propriety. (*Laughter.*)

The Attorney-General : Your Lordship is exceedingly witty and well-informed. But, with great respect, milord, that is not exactly the basis of the offence ; otherwise it would be equally dangerous to give an account of other people's pasts——

The Judge : It very often is. (*Laughter.*)

The Attorney-General : Milord, the prisoners in that dock have for many years been earning a livelihood by pretending to tell the fortunes or predict the futures, not of men and women, but of horses. They vary in method, in prose style, in confidence, and in popularity ; but they have this in common, that they do hold out to the people who read their newspapers that they are able, by some special gift or power or information, to predict with something approaching to certainty the future conduct and fortunes of race-horses. It will be proved in evidence, milord, that for these predictions, which are issued daily—even, I regret to say, milord, on the Sabbath Day—they receive money ; and that numbers of the people are deceived by their pretensions, act upon their predictions, and suffer damage. Some of the prisoners, milord, to take an example, have

already predicted that a horse named Diolite will win the Derby.

The Judge : What is the Derby ?

The Attorney-General : Milord, the Derby is one of the most popular horse competitions, in which colts of—— (*The Attorney-General here conferred with the Solicitor to the Treasury and continued*) : Milord, I am instructed that both colts *and* fillies of the age of three years take part in this race, and that considerable sums of money are wagered upon the event.

The Judge : Is it one of these trotting-races ?

The Attorney-General : No, milord, it is a galloping-race. Now, milord, in the eyes of the law there is no distinction between a man and a horse——

The Judge : Have you any authority for that, Sir Antony ?

The Attorney-General : I mean, milord, for fortune-telling purposes. The woman Sibylla was sent to prison for telling a police-officer that he would have good fortune and travel abroad, that a large sum of money was coming to him, that he would go a long journey and meet a dark lady in a foreign capital. Can it be said that that man is less deceitful and dangerous who tells the people that such-and-such a horse will start from a given place at a given time, travel a given journey, and arrive

at a given destination in advance of thirty other horses selected from a large number for their swiftness and staying power? The jury may well think that the latter set of prognostications is the more difficult to justify. For the conduct and career of the average man obey certain laws of probability and reason——

The Judge : Did you say ' man ' or ' woman ' ?
(*Laughter.*)

The Attorney-General : ' Man,' milord. (*Laughter.*) Most of us, for example, have, in fact, gone a long journey and met a dark lady in a foreign capital. But the behaviour of horses, as the expert witnesses will presently testify, appears to conform to no known laws, either of reason, psychology, or mathematical probability. Their actions are impulsive, capricious, and incalculable ; their health is delicate, their nervous system easily disturbed, and their moral sense negligible. The merest straw is sufficient to upset their temperaments and the hopes which human beings have formed concerning them. And this is especially true of those highly-bred and sensitive animals who compete professionally in the public horse-races. We shall hear in the course of this case, milord, of certain horses called ' favourites '——horses, milord, which because of their parentage, their past performances and the known ability

of the jockeys who are to ride them, are confidently expected by a majority of the persons interested to defeat all the competitors in this race or that. But we shall also hear that it is comparatively a rare event for the so-called 'favourite' to finish first ; and in fact, milord, he (or she) has been known to finish among the last, so many are the chances and accidents which in a race between horses may disappoint even the unanimous expectations of a people. Yet these are the animals, milord, whose fortunes the individuals in that dock have pretended to tell.

The Judge : Do you say, Mr. Attorney, that the prisoners have never made a prediction which proved to be correct ?

The Attorney-General : No, milord ; there have been cases——

The Judge : Then if the essence of the offence is the deceit, these cases must be placed to their credit.

The Attorney-General : No, milord ; with great respect, milord, they are an aggravation of the offence. For the rare occasions on which the prisoners are right tend to persuade the people that they have special powers and will be right again ; and, in fact, milord, these occasions are carefully recorded and advertised for the purpose of encouraging that belief. Boastful

placards, milord, such as ' Who gave you that Nap ? '——

The Judge : What is a ' Nap ' ?

(The Attorney-General conferred with the Treasury Solicitor.)

The Attorney-General : A ' Nap ', I am instructed, milord, is a prediction made with such exceptional confidence that the person addressed is advised to go ' Nap ' upon the indicated horse ; that is, milord, to put his shirt on it——

The Judge : Is that what is meant by a horse carrying weights ?

The Attorney-General : No, milord.

The Judge (impatiently) : It is all Greek to me. Go on, Sir Antony. Please don't waste time.

The Attorney-General : Milord, at a later stage I shall ask you to find different degrees of guilt among the prisoners. The prisoner from *The Times* newspaper, for example, has never, I believe, gone so far as to offer his readers a ' Nap '. His method is, milord, to discuss the history and idiosyncrasies of the various horses in prose of a thoughtful and delicate style ; and in conclusion he will write, after a hint of diffidence, some such phrase as, ' I must therefore take Beetroot to win '. A more modest formula, milord, than the ' Nap ' ; but in

essence, according to the prosecution, it is the same, that is to say, a prediction that Beetroot will be successful, a pretended telling of Beetroot's fortune. Indeed, milord, there is some evidence that the restraint and quietness of this man's prophetic utterances have induced in the public a greater confidence than the boastful purveyors of 'Naps' and 'Doubles' have been able to do ; that is to say, the section of the public which he addresses are made ready to bet, and therefore, in the end, to suffer damage. Nevertheless, milord, you may be prepared to consider, in mitigation of sentence, the care and beauty of this man's prose.

The Judge : What exactly is a bet ? What is the procedure ?

The Attorney-General had not concluded his address when the Court adjourned.

(1930)

XIX. THE DOCTOR

THE doctor took my shirt away ;
He did it for the best ;
He said, ' It's very cold to-day,'
And took away my vest ;
Then, having nothing more to say,
He hit me in the chest.
Oh, he did clout my ribs about
Till I was bruised and red,
Then stood and listened to my spine
To see if I was dead,
And when I shouted '*Ninety-nine !*'
He simply shook his head.
He rather thought that rain would fall,
He made me hop about the hall,
And savagely he said,
' *There's nothing wrong with you at all—*
You'd better go to bed !
' Oh, you must eat no scrap of meat,
No rabbit, bird, or fish ;
Apart from that have what you please,
But not potato, bread, or cheese ;
Not butter, alcohol, or peas ;
Not sausage, egg, and ratafias—
A very starchy dish ;
Have any other foods but these—

A. P. HERBERT

HAVE ANYTHING YOU WISH !
But at and after every meal,
And twice an hour between,
Take this—and this—and this—and THIS
In water and quinine,
And wash it down with liquorice
And nitro-glycerine.

‘ You must not smoke, or read a book,
You must not eat or drink ;
You must not bicycle or run,
You must not talk to anyone ;
It’s better not to *think*.
A daily bath I *don’t* advise ;
It’s dangerous to snore ;
But let your life be otherwise
As active as before.
And don’t imagine you are *ill*,
I beg you not to mope ;
There’s nothing wrong with you—but still,
While there is life there’s hope.’

I woke and screamed a hideous scream
As greedy children do
Who eat too much vanilla cream
For I was having ’flu ;
And it was just an awful dream—
But, all the same, it’s true.

(1922)

XX. TOO MUCH !

WELL, Mrs. Henn, and have you heard the latest ?

Biggest bit of foolishness to date !

Seems a millionaire

With a lot of cash to spare

Has given fifty thousand to the State.

Just fancy, giving money to the Government !

Might as well have thrown it all away.

Fancy giving money to the Government

When you and me have got the rent to pay !

Nobody can tell what men will do—

Always breaking out with something new ;

Nothing can surprise me—can it you ?

But fancy giving money to the Government !

When you think of all the milds and bitters

Fifty thousand Bradburys would buy !

Think of all the fun

You and me could have with *one*—

Isn't it enough to make you cry ?

Well, fancy giving money to the Government !

Might as well have put it down the drain.

Fancy giving money to the Government !

Nobody will see the stuff again.

A. P. HERBERT

*Well, they've no idea what money's for—
Ten to one they'll start another war.
I've heard a lot of silly things, but, Lor' !
Fancy giving money to the Government !*

I know a man who thinks that he's a chicken,
And you should hear him crowing when he
lays !

And then there's Uncle Fred
Plays the cornet in his bed—
Well, everyone has funny little ways :

*But fancy giving money to the Government !
Many a man's locked up for less than that.
Fancy giving money to the Government,
And me without a feather to me hat !
Think of all the good he might have done !
It's knocked the stuffing out of me, for one.
Drat me, if I don't become a nun !*

*Well, fancy—
giving—
money—
to the Government !*

(1930)

XXI. BEDLAM: OR THE EXPERT WITNESS

(*Carrot & Co. v. The Guano Association. Before Mr. Justice Wool*)

THERE was a dramatic climax to-day to Sir Ethelred Rutt's cross-examination of Mr. Stanley in the Canary Guano Case. Sir Ethelred, in his opening speech, described Mr. Stanley as 'the vilest thug in Christendom'. Troops lined the approaches to the Court, and there were some sharp exchanges between Sir Ethelred Rutt and Sir Humphrey Codd, in which both the famous advocates constantly thumped on the desk, raised their eyebrows and blew their noses. Sir Ethelred's brief is marked four thousand pounds, with 'refreshers' of two hundred pounds a day, and it is the general opinion in legal circles that the case will never finish. Had the defendant company been unable to secure his services, it is calculated that the case would have been clearly intelligible from the beginning, and in all probability would have been concluded in a day.

Sir Humphrey Codd, concluding his examination-in-chief, said: And, in fact, Mr. Stanley, the gist of your evidence is that there are, in fact, *no* vitamins in canary guano?

Mr. Stanley : That is so.

(Sir Ethelred Rutt then rose to cross-examine. Three well-dressed women fainted and were thrown out.)

Sir Ethelred : You are Mr. Stanley ?

Witness : That is my name.

Sir Ethelred : But of course, Mr. Stanley, your name is *not* Stanley at all—but Moss ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : And before the Great War your name was Moses ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : And before the South African war your name was Finkelstein ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : What was your name before the Crimean War ?

Witness : I forget.

Sir Ethelred : You forget ? *Very* well. And you appear as an expert witness for the plaintiff ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : Exactly. Now, Mr. Finkelstein, in your opinion, suppose a ton of canary guano is shipped at Hamburg f.o.b. Cardiff, adding two pounds of the best beef suet, and making the necessary adjustments for the Swiss Exchange, what would be the effect on a young girl ? Just tell the jury that, will you ?

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Witness : That would depend on the voltage.

The Judge (who took copious notes throughout the proceedings) : That—would—depend—on—the—voltage. Go on.

Sir Ethelred : And that was on the 22nd, I think ?

The Judge : My note says ' Bees-wax '.

Sir Ethelred : Melud, with great submission—that was the *last* case, I think.

The Judge : Oh ! But what about the charter-party ?

Sir Ethelred : I beg your pardon, melud. I am very much obliged to you, melud—— So that, *in fact*, Mr. Stanley, in the case of a widow, and counting thirteen to the dozen, the price of canary guano would vary with the weather in the ratio of 2 to 1, or 1 to 2 in the Northern hemisphere ?

Witness : That is so. Except, of course, at high water.

Sir Ethelred : Except at high water. Quite, quite. I understand that. Melud, I don't know whether the jury follow that.

The Judge (to the Jury) : You hear what the witness says ? There are thirteen to a dozen in the case of a widow, except at high water in the Northern hemisphere.

Sir Ethelred : Melud, with great respect, that is not *quite*——

The Judge (sternly) : Sir Ethelred, you go too far !

Sir Ethelred : I beg your pardon, melud. I am very much obliged to you, melud. (*To the witness*) : Have you got varicose veins, Mr. Stanley ?

Witness (warmly) : No !

Sir Ethelred : I put it to you, Mr. Stanley, that you *have* got varicose veins ?

Witness : Must I answer that, your honour ?

Sir Humphrey : Melud, I object. Me learned friend——

Sir Ethelred : Melud, I do submit—I have a reason for asking, melud.

<i>Sir Humphrey</i>	} Melud !
<i>Sir Ethelred</i>	

(The two famous advocates here engaged in a violent altercation in undertones.)

The Judge : Without anticipating anything I may have to say at a later stage, and subject to anything which may be disclosed in evidence next year, and bearing in mind the relations of the parties, and without prejudice to the issue of forgery, and *prima facie* and *statu quo*, and not forgetting the Boat Race, I think it right to say that so far as I understand the law (and, of course, I am a mere child in Sir Ethelred's hands) I shall at a suitable moment be prepared to say that the question is relevant

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and should be answered, subject to the consideration that this sentence has now continued so long that it may be arguable that the law has altered in the meantime.

Sir Ethelred : I am very much obliged, melud.

The Judge : But I don't see where it is leading us. (*To the witness.*) Have you got varicose veins?

Witness : Well, milord, it's like this——

The Judge (impatiently) : Come, come, my man, don't beat about the bush ! Either you have varicose veins or you have not.

Witness : Yes, milord, I have.

The Judge : Very well, then. (*Writing.*)

Question : 'Do—you—suffer—from—varicose—veins?' *Answer* : 'I—do.' Now then, Sir Ethelred, do let us get on !

Sir Ethelred (to the witness) : Now take your mind back to the 22nd of May, 1884. On the 22nd of May, 1884, Mr. Stanley—melud, I have rather a delicate question to put to the witness. Perhaps your Lordship would prefer me to commit it to writing?

The Judge : By 'delicate', Sir Ethelred, I take it that you mean 'indelicate'? (*Laughter.*)

Sir Ethelred : Yes, melud.

The Judge : Then I am afraid we must have the question.

Sir Ethelred : Melud, there is a woman on

the jury, and in view of the delicate character of the question, I propose, with your permission, to write it down in invisible ink and hand it to the witness in a sealed box.

The Judge : Very well, Sir Ethelred. This is great fun.

(Sir Ethelred then wrote rapidly on a piece of paper and handed it to the witness, who was unable to conceal his emotion. The question and the answer were then examined by counsel, tied up with string, and carefully disinfected, after which his Lordship carried them to the jury-box, where the foreman unpacked them and fainted. Meanwhile, to Sir Ethelred's obvious annoyance, public interest in the case was steadily mounting ; there was a baton charge in the corridor outside the court, and in the streets the troops were compelled to fire a volley over the heads of the crowd.)

Sir Ethelred : So on the 22nd May, 1884, Mr. Stanley, your wife bore you a male child ?

Witness : She did.

Sir Ethelred : Was that your *fourth* wife ?

Witness : No.

Sir Ethelred : Ah ! Would it be fair to say that you have committed alimony ?

Witness : Never !

Sir Ethelred : I put it to you that the suggestion

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I have put to you is consistent with the hypothesis that the answers you have given are easily distinguishable from the true facts?

Witness : It is a lie.

Sir Ethelred : Do you smoke in the bath?

Sir Humphrey : I object.

Sir Ethelred : I put it to you that you do smoke in the bath.

Witness : No.

Sir Ethelred : I suggest that you are a bully and a blackguard.

Witness : Nothing of the sort. Don't brow-beat me, sir!

The Judge : Now then, Mr. Stanley, you mustn't get into an altercation. Answer the question.

Witness : He didn't ask me a question. He made a statement.

The Judge (sternly) : Mr. Stanley, this is not far removed from contempt of court. It is my duty to protect learned counsel. Now answer the learned counsel's question.

Witness : I am sorry, milord.

Sir Ethelred : I put it to you that you are a bully and a blackguard.

Witness : No.

Sir Ethelred : Very well. Did you stay at the Grand Hotel, Palermo, in September, 1911, with a woman purporting to be your wife?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : Was she your wife ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : On the evening of the 11th September were you in your private room with a woman ?

Witness : Very likely.

Sir Ethelred : Be careful, Mr. Stanley—the house was being watched, you know. At nine p.m. did you draw the blinds in your private room ?

Witness : Very likely.

Sir Ethelred : Ah ! So you drew the blinds ? Will you tell the jury why you drew the blinds ?

Witness : To annoy the watchers.

The Judge : If you are not careful, Mr. Stanley, you will be placed in the Tower.

Sir Ethelred : Would it surprise you to learn that this letter which you wrote on the 30th May is in your own handwriting ?

Witness : No.

Sir Ethelred : Did you know a Mr. Trout who died of indigestion ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : Then do you still say that you do not smoke in the bath ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : I suggest that you do smoke in the bath.

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Witness : No.

Sir Ethelred : I put it to you that you smoked in the bath last April.

Witness : Very well. Have it your own way, Sir Ethelred.

Sir Ethelred : And you have committed alimony ?

Witness : No.

Sir Ethelred : Why not ?

Witness : I resent the innuendo.

Sir Ethelred : Is that your mentality, Mr. Moss ?

Witness : Leave my mentality alone.

Sir Ethelred (sternly) : Answer the question !

Sir Humphrey : Really, melud, I must object.

The Judge : I don't think the mentality of the witness is admissible, Sir Ethelred.

Sir Ethelred : Very well, melud. At Palermo, in September, there would be good sea-bathing ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : Would it be fair to say that you bathed at Palermo ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : In company with this woman who accompanied you ?

Witness : Yes.

Sir Ethelred : Mixed bathing ?

Witness : Certainly. My wife is a woman.

Sir Ethelred : Of course, Mr. Moss, I don't suggest that there is anything wrong in mixed bathing.

Witness : Then why did you refer to it ?

Sir Ethelred : Melud, I claim the protection of the Court.

The Judge : Mr. Moss, I am here to protect learned counsel, and I will not have them insulted. It is little I am allowed to do in these proceedings, but at least I can do that. Sir Ethelred is paid a great deal of money for cross-examining you, and the longer he cross-examines you the longer will the case continue and the more will Sir Ethelred be paid. It is therefore very selfish of you to take the bread out of his mouth by objecting to his little excursions into fancy. Moreover, he has the mind of a child, and has not the least idea how people really behave. He gets his ideas from French plays and detective stories, and you must admit that he is most entertaining. Moreover, he is very sensitive, so please answer his questions kindly, and don't upset him.

Sir Ethelred : I am very much obliged to your Lordship. Is three litres of acilysalic acid, Mr. Stanley, a greater or a less proportion than the same quantity of gin ?

Witness : It is not.

Sir Ethelred : I put it to you that it is.

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Witness : It is a lie.

Sir Ethelred : What was your name before it was Finkelstein ?

Witness : Rutt.

The Judge : Did you say ' Pratt ' ?

Witness : ' Rutt ', milord—RUTT.

The Judge : Oh—Wright.

(Sir Ethelred at this point seemed overcome and for a moment he was unable to proceed. The Judge ordered the windows to be opened.)

Sir Ethelred : Now tell the jury this. What were you doing on the night of the 30th June, 1891 ?

Witness : I was in bed.

Sir Ethelred : Did you, on the 30th June, 1891, deposit your infant child on the doorstep of the Foundling Hospital ?

Sir Humphrey : Really, melud, I must object. Me learned friend is not entitled——

Sir Ethelred : Melud, my instructions are, melud——

Sir Humphrey : Melud, me learned friend——

Sir Ethelred : Me learned friend, melud——

(Counsel here talked both at the same time, exchanging angry glances, thumping on the desk, and scratching each other.)

The Judge : I think I must allow the question. (*To the witness.*) Did you, in fact, dispose of your child in the manner suggested ?

Witness : I did, milord.

Sir Ethelred : I see. Would it be true to say, Mr. Moss, that at that date your son had a piece of red flannel tied round his middle?

Witness : It would.

Sir Ethelred : Exactly. Now take your time, Mr. Stanley, and be very careful how you answer. Had the child, or had he not, *in fact*, a little mole on the left elbow?

Sir Humphrey : Really, melud, with great respect, melud, me learned friend has no right, melud——

The Judge : That seems to me a perfectly proper question, Sir Humphrey.

Sir Ethelred : Well, Mr. Stanley?

Witness (with emotion) : God forgive me, he had. My little boy!

Sir Ethelred : Then you, Mr. Stanley, are my father.

Witness : My son! My son!

(Sir Ethelred here vaulted over the bar and embraced the witness, who seemed much affected by this dramatic reunion.)

The Judge : Is there any precedent for this proceeding, Sir Ethelred?

Sir Ethelred : No, melud.

The Judge : Then do not do it again.
The case was adjourned.

(1927)

XXII. FISH ROYAL

(*Tinrib, Rumble, and Others v. The King and Queen. Before Mr. Justice Wool*)

IN this unusual action, the hearing of which was begun to-day, an interesting point is raised concerning the rights and duties of the Crown in connexion with a dead whale.

Sir Ethelred Rutt, K.C., for the plaintiffs, said : May it please your Lordship, this action is brought by Mr. Tinrib, Mr. Rumble, and the other plaintiffs on behalf of the inhabitants of Pudding Magna, situated, melud, in the county of Dorset——

The Court : Where is Dorset ?

Sir Ethelred : Melud, I have a map here. Dorset, melud, if your Lordship will glance at the bottom left-hand corner—— Dorset, melud, is, melud, Dorset——

The Court : Quite——quite. Get on, please, Sir Ethelred.

Sir Ethelred : I am greatly obliged to your Lordship. Pudding Magna, melud, is situated in the north-east corner of Pudding Bay, or the Devil's Entry. The inhabitants are mainly fisher-folk of lowly origin and modest means, and, so far as can be ascertained, the place is not referred to

in any of the works of Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. William Wordsworth, or any other writer——

The Court : O si sic omnes !

Sir Ethelred : Ha ! Melud, in the night of the 21st June last a dead whale was washed up on the shore of Pudding Bay, at a point south-west by south from the township of Pudding Magna. Now, the whale, melud, together with the sturgeon and the swan, is Fish Royal, and belongs to the King ; or, to be precise, the head of the whale belongs to His Majesty the King and the tail to Her Majesty the Queen. Your Lordship will recall the case of *Rex v. Monday* (1841), 3 A.C., which decided the latter point.

The Court : I recall nothing of the kind.

Sir Ethelred : Your Lordship is very good. The loyal inhabitants of Pudding Magna, melud, made haste to extract from the carcass of the whale the whalebone, the blubber, and other valuable and perishable portions, with the intention, I am instructed, of holding them in trust for the Crown. And I may say at once that any other construction of their motives will be most strenuously resisted, if necessary, by sworn evidence. Three days later, melud, the wind, which had been northerly, shifted to the prevailing quarter, which is south-east——

Sir Wilfred Knocknee, K.C. : You mean south-west.

Sir Ethelred : I am very greatly obliged to me learned friend. Me learned friend is perfectly right, melud ; the prevailing wind is south-west, melud ; and, melud, on the fifth day the presence of the whale began to be offensive to the inhabitants of Pudding Magna. They therefore looked with confidence to the Crown to remove to a more convenient place the remnant of the Crown's property——

Sir Wilfred (aside) : For which they had no use.

Sir Ethelred : Really, melud, me learned friend must not whisper insinuations of that kind under his breath ; really, melud, I am entitled to resent, melud——

The Court : Go on, Sir Ethelred.

Sir Ethelred : Your Lordship is extraordinarily handsome and good. Accordingly, melud, the Mayor of Pudding Magna addressed a humble petition to the Home Secretary, melud, begging him to acquaint His Majesty with the arrival of his property and praying for its instant removal. And by a happy afterthought, melud, a copy of this petition was sent to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Happy, melud, for this reason, that the original communication appears to have escaped the notice of the Home Secretary entirely. At the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, however, the Mayor's letter was handed to a

public servant named Sleep, a new-comer to the Service, and one, it seems, who combined with a fertile imagination an unusual incapacity for the conduct of practical affairs. This gentleman has now left the public service, melud, and will be called.

It appears, melud, that, when the Mayor's letter had been lying unconsidered on Mr. Sleep's desk for several days, the following telegram was handed to him :

' To the King London whale referred to in previous communication now in advanced stages decomposition humbly petition prompt action Tinrib

Mr. Sleep, melud, according to his own account, turning the matter over in his sagacious mind, at once hit upon a solution which would be likely to satisfy the requirements of His Majesty's Treasury with regard to public economy. Two days later, therefore, a letter was addressed to the Director of the Natural History Museum informing him that an unusually fine specimen of *Balæna Biscayensis* was now lying in Pudding Bay and that the Minister was authorized by His Majesty to offer the whale to the Museum in trust for the nation, the Museum to bear the charges of collection and transport.

On July 3rd, melud, the Secretary to the Natural History Museum replied that he was asked by the Director to express his regret that, owing to lack of space, the Museum was unable to accept His Majesty's gracious offer. He was to add that the Museum was already in possession of three fine specimens of *Balæna Biscayensis*.

Melud, for some days, it appears, Mr. Sleep took no further action. Meanwhile, melud, the whale had passed from the advanced to the penultimate stages of decomposition, and had begun to poison the sea at high-water, thereby gravely impairing the fishermen's livelihood. Mr. Tinrib, melud, was in constant, but one-sided, correspondence with Mr. Sleep ; and on the 12th of July, melud, Mr. Sleep lunched with a friend and colleague at the Admiralty, Mr. Sloe. While they were engaged, melud, upon the discussion of fish, the topic of whales naturally arose, and Mr. Sleep, melud, unofficially, melud, expressed to Mr. Sloe the opinion that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries would be willing to grant to the Admiralty the use of the whale for the purposes of target-practice ; and he suggested that one of His Majesty's ships should be immediately detailed to tow His Majesty's whale out to sea. He also pointed out the peculiar advantages of such a target for the exercise of such vessels

as were called upon to fire at submarines. Mr. Sloe, melud, undertook to explore the opinion of the Admiralty on the proposal, and the conference broke up.

That was on the 12th. On the 17th, melud, Mr. Sloe unofficially, melud, at a further lunch, intimated to Mr. Sleep that he could find no support among their Lordships of the Admiralty for the proposal of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries ; for, while excellent practice was to be had from a disappearing target, their Lordships could not sanction the expenditure of ammunition on a target which must, at most ranges, be quite invisible. Further, it was their opinion that by the date of the autumn firing-practices the whale would have suffered dissolution by the ordinary processes of nature.

The inhabitants of Pudding Magna, melud, did not share this view. On the 20th, melud, Mr. Tinrib and a deputation waited upon Mr. Sleep. They pointed out to Mr. Sleep that all fishing was suspended in Pudding Bay ; that Pudding Magna was now barely habitable except on the rare occasions of a northerly wind ; that the majority of the citizens had fled to the hills and were living in huts and caves. They further inquired, melud, whether it would be lawful for the fishermen themselves to destroy the whale, so far as that could be

done, with explosives, and, if so, whether the Crown would refund the cost of the explosives, which might be considerable. As to this, melud, Mr. Sleep was unable to accept the responsibility of expressing an opinion ; but the whale was undoubtedly Crown property, and he questioned gravely whether the Treasury would sanction the expenditure of public money on the destruction of Crown property by private citizens. He also pointed out that the Treasury, if approached, would be likely to require a strict account of any whalebone, blubber, and other material extracted from the whale's carcass. Mention of explosives, however, had suggested to his mind that possibly the War Office might be interested in the whale, and he undertook to inquire. The deputation agreed, melud, that this perhaps would be the better course, and withdrew.

On the 24th, melud, a letter was dispatched to the War Office pointing out that the whale now lying in Pudding Bay offered excellent opportunities for the training of engineers in the removal of obstacles, and could well be made the centre of any amphibious operations, landing-parties, invasions, etc., which might form part of the forthcoming manœuvres. The War Office would doubtless take note of the convenient proximity of the whale to the Tank Corps Depot at Lulworth.

On the 31st, melud, the War Office replied that the destruction of whales by tanks was no longer considered a practicable operation of war, and that no part of the forthcoming manœuvres would be amphibious.

From this date, melud, Mr. Sleep seems to have abandoned his efforts. At any rate, on the 4th of August, Mr. Tinrib received the following evasive and disgraceful communication :

WHALE, CARCASS OF

' Dear Sir,

' I am desired by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries to observe that your representations to this Department appear to have been made under a misapprehension. It should hardly be necessary to state that the whale is not a fish but a mammal. I am therefore to express regret that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries can accept no responsibility in the matter.'

In these circumstances, melud, the inhabitants, or I should say the *late* inhabitants, of Pudding Magna have been compelled to institute these proceedings, and humbly pray——

The case was adjourned.

(1927)

